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THE
LIGHT TO THE PATH:

*What the Bible has been to others, and
what it can do for ourselves.*

BY
JAMES HAMILTON, D.D., F.L.S.

A NEW EDITION.



LONDON:
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.
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PREFACE.

TWELVE years ago the Author published a small volume entitled, "The Lamp and the Lantern : or, The Bible a Light to the Tent and the Traveller." Appearing at the time when the Bible Society was holding its jubilee, it contained many things of which the interest has passed away, and which are omitted in the present edition. Their place is supplied by materials which, it is hoped, may possess more enduring value ; and the writer takes advantage of the present opportunity to substitute for the original name a title less alliterative.



CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE BIBLE AND THE INQUIRER, . . .	I
II. THE BIBLE AND THE BELIEVER, . . .	20
III. THE BIBLE AND THE INVALID, . . .	35
IV. LESSONS IN THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE —THE CHEQUE AND THE COUNTER- FOIL, ...	40
V. LESSONS IN THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE —THE MOULD AND THE MEDALLION, . . .	58
VI. THE MUSTARD SEED ; OR, THE GROWTH OF THE GOSPEL, ...	72
VII. LEAVEN ; OR, THE CIVILISING INFLU- ENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, ...	85
VIII. THE LITERARY ATTRACTIONS OF THE BIBLE, ...	98
IX. THE ILLUMINATED BIBLE AND THE LIVING EPISTLE, ...	133
X. HINTS TO THE BIBLE STUDENT, . . .	148
INDEX, ...	169



CHAPTER I.

THE BIBLE AND THE INQUIRER.

n A FATHER and a son were on a journey. It was late in the afternoon, but still clear day, when they came to a cottage by the road-side, and the father went in and borrowed a lighted lantern. The young man was exceedingly amused, and perhaps he was a little vexed. If any one should meet them carrying a lamp in the sunshine, it would look so absurd ; and what in the world was the use of it ? But the older traveller took the young man's jibes good-humouredly, and only answered, "The night cometh." And it did come. They passed no more cottages, but they got into a thick forest, where the daylight faded so rapidly that the lantern already shone a welcome companion. Not only was the sun gone down, but the last streak of twilight had vanished. It was dreadfully dark ; but the good little lantern spread a

cloth of gold before the steps of the travellers, and did not let one shadow or phantom come near them. At last the road divided. "Straight on!" cried the youth. "Not so fast," said the elder; for though the path to the right was less trodden, perhaps it was the one they should take; when fortunately they espied a finger-post, and holding the lamp as high as they could, they read the direction, and found that they would have gone utterly wrong, had they not taken the narrow and neglected footway. Rejoicing at their escape, they pushed on merrily; and by and by with his frisky spirits the youngster went ahead, and was far in advance of the lantern, when the old man heard a plash and a shout, and running up, was just in time to help ashore his impetuous boy, who had soused into a stagnant pool, and who crawled up the bank pale and shivering, with the leeches and duckweed clinging to his garments. "You see the road was not through this pool, but round it. You should walk in the light;" and so they again set out together. As the stillness deepened, they sometimes heard a rustle in the bushy undergrowth, and distant howlings or a sharp snarl near-hand warned them that the beasts of the forest were abroad; and once or twice they could see a pair of fiery opals glaring at them, but as soon as they turned the full flame of the lantern in that direction the goblin

retreated. We need not tell the whole adventures of the night ; but at last they came to a place where a heavy moan arrested them, and searching in the copse, they found a man stretched on the ground and badly hurt. He had either received a blow on the head, or he had inhaled some stupifying ether, for at first he talked very incoherently. It turned out, that as he had been coming along, a gentleman in black had prevailed on him to cast his lantern into the ditch, and that soon after some footpad had knocked him down and dragged him off the road and robbed him of all his money. As soon as he was somewhat restored, they set him on his beast, and journeyed on together. The day was breaking, and the forest was thinning off on the margin of a magnificent domain. They looked forth on vine-clad hills and a shining river ; and though the palace itself could be descried but dimly,—it was so far up in the dazzling sunrise,—they could easily make out many mansions. “I am home !” cried the old man ; and the full morning was reflected from his face as he added, “Mine eyes shall see the king in his beauty ; they shall behold the land that is very far off.” And as he embraced his comrades, he handed over the lantern to his son, and said, “Keep this as a light unto your feet, and a lamp unto your path.” The youth prized the keepsake. He found constant occasion for it. He brightened

up the four windows, by which it sent its light backward and forward, and on either side ; and with the point of a diamond he traced these mottoes on them :—

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way ? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.”

“When thou goest, it shall lead thee ; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee : and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light.”

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.”

“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

A lamp lighted while it is yet day,—such a lamp as is let into the roof of a railway carriage, and the little child wonders why they should put it there at noon, but for which no one is more grateful when a few minutes afterwards they plunge into the tunnel ; such a lantern as the prudent traveller provides before he is benighted,—such a lamp is no bad emblem of our own case in relation to the Bible. God has provided us with a sufficient guide to a blissful immor-

talities. His Word is a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path. In Britain, throughout Protestant Europe, in the whole of North America, there is hardly any one who may not, if he chooses, find and keep that path of faith and holiness which leads to heaven. But few set out on the great pilgrimage whilst the daylight lasts. It is not till all around is growing dark, that they remember that this is not their rest, and that they have a city still to seek. It is not till shadows from the tomb, or conscious guilt, or clouds of grief enwrap them, that they find they must sport no longer. And as they grasp their staff, and gird their loins, they bless that wonderful goodness which has already furnished them with a light so clear and unquenchable. In their merry moments they paid no attention to it. They hardly knew that it was burning. Now they are astonished at its brightness. The intenser that the shadow grows, the more dazzling does it shine; and now that neither sun nor stars appear,—now that the glare of folly, or the glee of health has faded,—they find to their surprise, that their route is becoming plainer, and their spirit waxing stronger; for, as if instinctively aspiring back to the “perfect day” from which it came, the lamp burns brighter and yet brighter as they go.

“Young man, attend to the voice of one who has possessed a certain degree of fame in the

world, and who will shortly appear before his Maker. Read the Bible every day of your life." So said Dr Johnson to a young gentleman, who visited him on his death-bed ; and so has many a pastor said to his young people,—so has many a dying parent said to his children. And if it were from a minister, or some venerable Christian friend that you heard such counsel, you received it respectfully ; if it were from a dying father or mother, with tears you promised to comply. Have you forgotten ? Have you wearied in well-doing ? Have late hours or other pursuits supplanted the Word of God ? No : you say that you read it still. But you read it as a task. You would be glad of a dispensation. You would be thankful for a release which would not hurt your conscience, or impeach your filial piety. You carry about the lantern, because you would deem it a profanity or a breach of promise to cast it away. But hitherto you have found no real occasion for it ; and it would not be honest to say that you have used it as a light to your feet, for you have never sought nor followed its guidance.

And yet, dear friend, God can soon make that Bible precious. He can send a dangerous sickness ; and when you are amusing yourself with a novel or a game of cards, the doctor may come in, and after he is gone your friends are agitated ; your sister looks pale, her eyelids are moist, her

cheerfulness is forced ; and it all comes out : You are never to get better,—you have sentence of death in yourself. And, after the first flutter of surprise, you push away the novel or the cards, and you say, “Bring me my Bible.” Or you went to church one Sunday, and God’s Word found you out. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” “Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” “He that believeth shall be saved : he that believeth not shall be damned.” You heard something which made you feel that if you continue as you are, it would have been better for you never to be born. You grew dull and moody ; but, after a few rebellious strugglings, your spirit was subdued. You saw yourself in a new light, and that holy law of God which you have been all your life transgressing. You felt that you had done wickedly and that you were truly vile. And in this humble frame of mind you took up the Testament, and, as well as you could recall them, you turned to those passages which tell the grace of the Lord Jesus, or which announce God’s pardoning mercy. What it was that caught your eye at last we do not know ; but it caught your heart as well ; for you were presently on your knees, with tears of surprise and thankfulness drenching the open

volume, and sobbing out your praises to Him "who forgiveth all your iniquities, and crowneth you with loving-kindness and tender mercies." And ever since, notwithstanding many decays and declensions, you have been a very different reader and hearer of the Word from what you were before.

It is by making the heart soft or the spirit serious, that God makes His own Word precious. It was in this way that several of the French prisoners in England, during the war with Napoleon, to all of whom copies of the Scriptures were offered, came under its subduing and renovating influence. In the absence of amusement and with nothing to excite them, many of them beguiled occasional hours of captivity with a book, which in the bustle of the camp they would never have dreamed of opening. They learned from it a secret which reconciled them to many a privation, and which sent more than one of them back to France enriched with the pearl of great price. It is thus that many a convict has had cause to acknowledge with gratitude the timely detection which brought him acquainted with God's Word, and which, making him a new creature, admitted to the fellowship of saints the outcast of society. And it is thus that many a man has had reason to adore that gracious, though for the moment mysterious, sovereignty, which stripped him of

his wealth, or deprived him of his dearest friend, or left him for life a shattered invalid ; but which, in the same dispensation, taught him to cry, "The judgments of the Lord are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold." "I am a stranger in the earth : hide not thy commandments from me." "I am become like a bottle in the smoke ; yet do I not forget thy statutes."

It does not matter what has been the sobering or softening influence. It does not matter whether there has been some striking providence, or whether, from causes which you can hardly specify, you have been brought to unwonted solicitude about the one thing needful. There is One Being with whom, if your relations are right, nothing need greatly disquiet you ; and there is only one document which can inform you how with Him right relations may be secured and maintained. This is the peculiar value of Scripture, that to the question which Nature only answers by dim hieroglyphics or brilliant paradoxes, its reply is articulate and authoritative ; and on the problem, which reason could not meet even by approximation, it sheds the light of a simple and exhaustive solution. To the question, "What is God?" it answers,—not space,—not nature,—not the universe,—not merely the Great First Cause ; but it answers, Jehovah : Jehovah all-sufficient : the Lord Almighty : that living and personal God whose

justice and benevolence are as infinite as His wisdom and power, and who does not embark vaster resources or a stronger interest in the framing of a world than He can afford for the welfare and enjoyment of some one like yourself, created after His own image, and of whose spirit He claims to be the Father. And to the further question, "What are the dispositions of this God, so just and benevolent, so wise and mighty,—what are His dispositions to a sinner like me?" it answers "merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." But comforting as this assurance is, it is not conclusive: and till the final query is met,—till you know what to do so as to attract towards yourself God's mercy rather than His justice,—general information as to the Divine generosity and goodness can give you no absolute confidence God-ward. It is here that the Scripture comes forth with its specific announcement, and meets the soul longing for God's friendship with its welcome oracle. God has sent forth His Son to redeem and retrieve lost sinners of our race. The expiator for our guilt, and, if resorted to, the intercessor for our souls, as willing as He is worthy, the Son of God is man's Saviour; and to plead His atonement,—to cling in grateful dependence to His cross,—is the same thing as to see our name in Life's Book, our soul in Life's Bundle. God loves the Saviour, and to those

who receive Him He gives power to become sons of God. Sin is perdition, but the antidote of sin is the merits of the Saviour. Sin is perdition, but union to Christ is salvation.

As the present remarks are chiefly designed for those who are just making a commencement in religion, or who are only thinking about it, we shall conclude with a few words to those who feel some interest in the subject, but who have not yet come to a plenary persuasion that the Scriptures are the Word of God ; and to those to whom the subject itself is distasteful, for they despise or dislike that great salvation which the Scriptures reveal.

I. You feel an interest in religion, but you are not sure that you have found a revelation. And if there were only time, you could mention a great many difficulties *in* the Book and *about* the Book which have hitherto prevented you from receiving the Bible as the undoubted Word of God. And you want to know, "What am I to do? I cannot love Christ, till I am convinced of the facts concerning Him ; and I shall not be convinced till once I am furnished with conclusive evidence. I assure you that I am in earnest, but I am not convinced. Where shall I find the evidence?"

Permit us then to ask : If a doctrine were holy, and if predictions were uttered, and miracles

were wrought in its behalf, would you not believe that holy doctrine thus attested to be truly divine? Based on such prophecies and miracles, would you not feel that it rested directly on the omniscience and omnipotence of God? But with Jews still in the world, and with their Old Testament the same as our own, do you not believe that the Old Testament prophecies were uttered long before the appearance of Jesus Christ? And from the proofs of their sincerity given by the apostles do you not believe that the miracles which they have recorded in the New Testament are true? In other words, do you not believe that as the fulfilment of so many prophecies and the fountain of so many miracles, Jesus Christ was all that He claimed to be, and which His first disciples died declaring,—the Son of God and the Saviour of men?

Then again, on the Saviour's authority and from the wonderful fulfilment of their prophecies, do you not believe that the books of the Old Testament are inspired? On the strength of Christ's promises and their own frequent assertions, do you not believe that the apostles were divinely commissioned to unfold the Christian doctrine more fully to the world? And on the testimony of friends and foes from the first century downwards, from the impossibility of forgery, and on their internal evidence, do you not believe that the books of the New Testament

are the writings of Christ's apostles? And believing all this, do you not actually concede that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God? *

In a matter of such moment we do not deprecate the utmost caution; but at the same time, in a matter of such urgency you should not grudge the utmost diligence. It is the turn of your mind to "prove all things," and, like that most sagacious of animals which will not cross a bridge till it has tested its strength,—you say that you can adventure no interest except on a well-proven conclusion. So be it; but at the same time remember that this is no holiday excursion, but a life or death retreat,—an escape for dear existence. Remember that betwixt this islet which you occupy and a blissful immortality,—betwixt mortal life and eternal glory, if this bridge be not trustworthy, there is not any other. Your choice is small. It is not, Which of many? It is not even, Which of two? But it is, This or none! You are in the predicament of a castaway, who finds himself on a dry sandbank surrounded by a rising tide. There were only a few furlongs of it at the first, and already it is half submerged, when

* By such a process of successive inferences, a most accomplished student describes himself as conducted to the threshold of that faith, which became the joy and rejoicing of his heart.—*Memoir of Rev. J. Brown Paterson*, pp. 152, 153.

the people on the shore espy him and send a boat to bring him off. But he cavils at its construction. He doubts if it is safe. He questions if it will ever get to land. Nay, he has strong suspicions that there is no land at all. But what do you intend to do? There is nothing else in sight—neither sail nor steam. And you have not long to hesitate. Your bank grows less. The waters rise. They soon will swell up to the brim, and the place that knows you now will not know you to-morrow. You might have trusted us: for all this trouble was taken, not to destroy one who is drowning at any rate, but with the hope of saving you.

You say that you are sincere and earnest. We rejoice to hear it; for in that event it is no uncertain issue. Doubtless, there is an earnestness which prevents people from deriving the full comfort from the most abundant and overwhelming evidence; just as a man's anxiety for his own or his children's safety may make him question the sea-worthiness of a first-class vessel. In the present case few are rendered nervous by inordinate anxiety: far more continue sceptical, or languidly assenting, because their solicitude is only a troubled sleep—a half-awakened apathy. If you are only sufficiently in earnest, your doubts will soon dispel. In His Word God has not left Himself without a witness. The strongest consolation in this world is theirs

who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel, and the most rational of men is the believer in Jesus.

To every man who is really earnest, the Bible, sooner or later, commends itself as the Word of the true and holy God ; and its pre-eminent revelation, the gospel, commends itself as the wisdom and the power of God. It is no true earnestness which does not make men candid ; and in the case of Christianity candour is the high-road to conviction. A guileful heart may be superstitious, and the evil heart of unbelief may be strangely credulous ; but it is the heart which God himself makes "honest" which yields to evidence, and which, when God speaks, instinctively trembles at the Word—which, when God shines forth, immediately rejoices and adores. "From me Christ required no miracles as witnesses of His truth ; He himself, His life, His thoughts, His actions, towered above the mist of centuries,—the one perpetual miracle of history, the holy ideal of a perfect humanity." Such was the deliverance of a late popular Swiss author : * and the same self-evidencing power of the Scriptures has been thus described by a man of science at Strasburg : †—"A single book has saved me ; but that book is not of human origin. Long had I despised it, long had I deemed it a class-book for the credulous and

* Zchokke.

† Professor Bautain.

ignorant ; until, having investigated the gospel of Christ, with an ardent desire to ascertain its truth or falsity, its pages proffered to my inquiries the sublimest knowledge of man and nature, and the simplest, and, at the same time, the most exalted system of ethics. Faith, hope, and charity were enkindled in my bosom ; and every advancing step strengthened me in the conviction that the morals of this book are as superior to human morals, as its oracles are superior to human opinions."

The fact is, when a man holds out his lantern, and asks you if there is a light in it, you may be able to convince him that there is ; but the very circumstance of his asking such a question makes you fear that he is blind ; and at all events five minutes of clear vision would be worth a world of your arguments. When a man asks, Do you think the Bible is inspired ? is it really the light of God which is shining there ? you may prove it by unanswerable argument ; and yet you cannot help regretting that he should need to appeal to others ; nor can you help remembering how it stands written, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them ; for they are spiritually discerned."* To any one who finds himself in this predicament, the best advice we can give is,

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Read and pray. Yes, read and pray. Pray, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." And as you pray this prayer, read the book, and ponder its sayings ; and better feelings will spring up in your mind — holy thoughts and loving, grateful thoughts towards Christ, kind thoughts towards your fellows, devout and contrite thoughts towards God. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes : " and it opens the eyes by rejoicing the heart.* You cannot be long in wistful contact with it without imbibing some of its hallowing influence. You cannot look long at the lamp till its own quickening radiance has opened your eyes. Whilst to its sure word you are still taking heed, the day will dawn and the day-star arise in your heart.

2. Dear reader, it is a solemn thing to be entrusted with these lively oracles. That Bible is a sacred book. It is God's angel, either hospitably lodged or ignominiously neglected in our homes. May that messenger of God's mercy never prove, through mal-treatment, the recorder of our guilt, and the fatal witness against our wilful impenitence and reprobate mind ! For whether or not we open the Bible to ascertain God's present will concerning us, it is one of the books which shall be opened, and by which our lot shall be fixed, when He comes to decide

* Psalm xix. 8.

our final destiny. We are not done with it. We must meet it yet again. Before the great reckoning day there will be an end of most human authorship ; and, except as the good or evil which they have done may rise up to bless or condemn the writers, no more will be heard of them. But when all other books are forgotten, when these heavens and this earth have passed away, not a jot nor a tittle of God's Word shall have perished ; but by the light of the Great White Throne we shall read the self-same pages which we so often turned over in our earthly dwellings. Oh that we could occasionally read these Scriptures with that impression on our minds :—This is the Word of God which endureth for ever. When I awake on the resurrection morning I shall see few of the things with which I am now familiar. My house and my lands will not be worth a day's purchase then, and gold and precious stones may be had for the gathering : but the soul will be worth exactly what the Bible declared :—it will be cheap could it be bought with a whole world. The comrades whose smile of connivance or whose drunken plaudits used to embolden me in sin, will not avail me when I stand confronted with a holy God ; but just as the Bible has said I shall find it,—“ Though hand join in hand the wicked shall not be unpunished.” The systems of philosophy, and the different forms of human

religion will melt in the midst of that great unveiling ; and the popular opinion may turn out a grand illusion : but in the new heavens and the new earth I shall recognise the same Jehovah, and shall read the same grand principles of right and wrong, with which I was brought acquainted when a child in the Sabbath school. Yes, names and notions written in the earth must corrode, and crumble, and pass away ; the earth itself must melt in fervent heat, and revive in a new creation ; but Christ's words shall never pass away. Nay, in their lonely and majestic surviving they shall seem to absorb all other words into themselves ; and as I read the flame-bright legends on the tables of eternity, amidst the wreck of all besides, Revelation will stand out the great reality ; and I shall feel the responsibility which, in his retrospect of the "Course of Time," the poet ascribes to the possessors of this volume :—

"They had the Bible. Hast thou ever heard
Of such a book?—The author God himself.
The subject God and man ; salvation, life
And death—eternal life, eternal death !
Most wondrous book ! bright candle of the Lord !
Star of eternity !—the only star
By which the bark of man could navigate
The sea of time, and gain the coast of life securely.
This book,—this holiest, this sublimest book,—
Was sent—heaven's will, heaven's code of laws entire—
To man : this book contained, defined the bounds
Of vice and virtue, and of life and death ;
And what was shadow, what was substance taught."



CHAPTER II.

THE BIBLE AND THE BELIEVER.

IN the spring of 1817, there used to meet together in a large saloon at Geneva, from twenty to thirty students. Some of them were ardent and accomplished young men, and all of them were aspirants to the Christian ministry. But at that time little faith was found in Geneva. The city of Calvin and Beza was under the spell of Voltaire and Rousseau, and in the christened Paganism of its Theological Academy, "St Plato and St Seneca" had supplanted St Paul and St Peter. These young men assembled every alternate evening, and took their places at a long table, on which lay the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, with many versions, German, French, and English. In this little college, the professor was a retired naval officer from Britain. He was a grave and thoughtful man. He had

gained his ascendancy over his scholars, by the interest which he manifested in their future ministry. They had no idea that the pastorate was such a responsible and weighty office ; but as he spoke so seriously about the thousands of souls of which they were soon to have oversight, the solemnity of the stranger solemnised themselves. They were now searching the Scriptures daily, on purpose to ascertain the truth of God : and as unheard-of doctrines, such as human corruption, the incarnation, justification by the righteousness of another, one by one came forth from the open volume, great was the astonishment of these youthful "Bereans." Of course, many difficulties were felt, and not a few objections and cavils were started : but it was only by comparing scripture with scripture, that Mr Haldane explained or defended its statements. "There it stands written with the finger of God," was the end of the matter ; nor was there any question on which texts did not occur instant and apposite to this "living concordance." As the result, almost every one of these students became a distinguished evangelist ; and in the persons of men like Gonthier and Rieu and Merle d'Aubigné, many dark places in France, Belgium, and Switzerland were penetrated by the light of the gospel ; nor is it saying too much to affirm, that, through the Evangelical Society in which it ended, the whole of French-

speaking Europe is destined to feel the effects of that season's earnest Bible-searching.*

The Bible is the book out of which every reformation of doctrine has issued, and every revival of religion. And whether we are called to be the instructors of others, or are only desiring security and precision to our own system, we cannot do better than resort at once to the oracle. Or, as is still more likely, if any one of us has notions indefinite or undecided on some important article, he cannot do better than study that portion of Scripture in which it is especially treated. Is it the person of Christ on which you long for clearer light? Do you want to know whether He is Divine, and whether without idolatry you may give Him not only love and gratitude, but adoration and worship? Then read the books of St John. Is it the great atonement on which you desire to be more fully informed? Do you wish to know the exact function which the great High Priest discharges, —whether His “finished” work be an exclusive and exhaustive expiation for sins, or a sacrifice requiring constant repetitions, and originating a new sacerdotal order? Then read the Epistle to the Hebrews. Or is it on the doctrine of justification that you covet more precise and

* See “The Lives of Robert and James Alexander Haldane,” chap. xviii.

thorough instruction? Do you seek to know where God would have you rest your hope of heaven? whether it is your faith, or your feelings, or your improving self, that He would have you trust,—or His own dear Son the Saviour? Then read the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. Whatever be the point on which you would know the mind of God, you will find some portion of His Word which gives forth the Divine deliverance; and when that portion is illustrated and confirmed by appropriate parallels, your faith will stand not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.

However, to regard the Book as a mere oracle giving forth responses on doctrinal questions, is a cold theory of Scripture. The poet * tells how he “shot an arrow into the air,” and owing to the swiftness of its flight he lost it. In like manner, he adds,

“I breathed a song into the air;
It fell to earth, I knew not where.
Long, long afterward in an oak
I found the arrow still unbroke:
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.”

Such recoveries and recognitions of one's thoughts are always pleasant. You had forgotten the saying; but months afterward some one tells you how to him it had proved such a word

* Longfellow.

in season. You have no remembrance of having ever met this prosperous merchant ; but he asks, "Do you not recollect the advice you gave a young man, who brought you a letter of introduction from such a friend twenty years ago?—advice which I followed, and here I am." Nor does anything delight you more, than to find that you are so loved by another that he acts on your wishes, and you constantly see carried out in his silent proceedings, requests or suggestions of your own. If the most delicate token of affection, this is also the most decisive. It proves that you live in the heart of your friend ; and that, seen or not seen, you are truly dear to him.

God's bow is never bent at a venture. He never loses sight of His arrows. No word of His ever misses its mark, but each accomplishes its purpose. And yet it is not the less a joy to Him when that word finds a welcome, and of all men he is to the Most High the dearest, in whose affections God's words are hidden the most deeply, and in whose conduct they most conspicuously reappear.

Perhaps, it will be brought still nearer to our apprehension if we recall the saying of the Saviour, "If ye abide in me, and *my words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love ; even as I have

kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love."* In the heart of Immanuel were hidden all the desires and commandments of the Father ; and to carry them into effect, was the labour of love which gave unity and grandeur to His entire incarnate history. And it was this which drew towards Him the perpetual complacency of His heavenly Father. On the one side, the obedience of His beloved Son was an incense ever ascending through the sin-laden atmosphere of earth ; and, on the other side, the Father's recognition of that obedience was a blessing constantly returning,—dispelling in some degree the miasma of the curse, and opening through our murky air streaks of that sapphire which formed the firmament of an untainted Paradise. And just as it was by keeping the Father's commandments that the Son abode in the Father's love, so it is by keeping the Saviour's commandments that He tells us we shall abide in the Saviour's love. Nay, if Christ's word abide in us, we shall come to such a blessed unison,—our will shall be in such harmony with His, and such a delight shall it be to Him to show His love to His disciple, that "we shall ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us."

The Saviour desires our love. He desires to live in our grateful affection. And just as whatever we do in remembrance of Him, helps to en-

* John xv. 7, 10.

dear Him to us, so the more richly that His word dwells in us, the dearer are we to Himself.

Wherever such a word is acted out, the soul is at once made happier and stronger. It is instantly brought nearer to that Divine Friend whose promise is thus trusted, or whose wishes are thus fulfilled : and, as an inevitable consequence, it receives an augmentation of spiritual vigour, and is better able to believe the next true saying, or to do the next right thing.

A little girl, ten years of age, who had long been nursing a sick sister, and whose mother was in feeble health, was getting quite worn out. One morning as she trudged along to procure medicine,—as she thought how hard it was to be always waiting on the invalid when other children were at play : and then, when she thought how likely it was that her sister would die,—betwixt weariness and grief she began to weep bitterly. But a sudden thought crossed her mind. Her tears were dried, and her step grew light and nimble. After she returned, noticing how cheerfully she went about her work, and how briskly and easily she did it, her mother asked the reason. It turned out that the verse had come into her memory, “I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness has afflicted me.” Day and night thenceforward she never wearied in her attendance on the invalid. Her cheerful countenance

did more good than any medicine. And ere long she had her reward, for her sister recovered.*

Mr Simeon, of Cambridge, was at one time an object of much contempt for Christ's sake and the gospel. And though usually he bore up bravely, it was very trying to know that nobody liked to be seen in his company : and one day as he walked along with his little Testament in his hand, he prayed that God would send him some cordial in His Word. Opening the book his eye alighted on the text, "They found a man of Cyrene, Simon (or Simeon) by name ; him they compelled to bear Jesus' cross." "And when I read that," he tells us, "I exclaimed, 'Lord, lay it on me : lay it on me ; I will gladly bear the cross for Thy sake.' And I henceforth bound persecution as a wreath of glory round my brow."†

In the Tower of London you have read the verse inscribed by one of the bloody Mary's prisoners, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." And you remember how it is related of the Nonconformist, Mr Lawrence, of Baschurch, that when some one reminded him that he had eleven good arguments against giving up his living, and asked him how he meant to maintain his wife and ten children,

* "The Holy Scriptures" (Tract Society Anecdotes)—where many interesting facts are collected.

† Simeon's Life, p. 676.

he answered, "They must all live on the sixth of Matthew, 'Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? but seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'" And countless instances might be quoted where, to every range of intellect, from the little child up to the learned philosopher, and in all emergencies, from a matter of daily routine up to a question of life or death, the all-fitting and all-foreseeing Word of Christ has been the antidote of temptation, the incentive to duty, the joy in tribulation. On its nail fastened in a sure place thousands have suspended their earthly future as well as their eternal all, and they have not been confounded. With its sword turning either way they have put to flight armies of doubts and fears, and whole legions of Satanic suggestions. Times without number on the guilty conscience of the troubled spirit has a healing leaf descended, fresh from the Tree of Life, and charmed into the evening's ecstasy the morning's anguish. None of that Word shall return to the Great Speaker "void;" for according to their various faith or susceptibility, absorbed into the soul of disciples, it will outlive the most enduring of tablets, and outshine the most brilliant of transcripts; and although every Bible should perish, the whole of Christ's sayings might be recovered from His living

epistles. They might all be collected again in the hearts of Christ's friends.

All flesh is grass, and the grave is fast filling with great authors. Once they are there, praise cannot flatter them, affection cannot cheer them. And, except that small number whose "works do follow them," they may either be ignorant of the influence which they are exerting in the land of the living, or they would rather that they did not know. But the Author of the Bible lives. The Saviour, whose sayings it perpetuates, lives. The Holy Spirit, who taught the men of God to write it, lives. It is a joy to the Lord Jesus when any saying of His finds a frank believer or a cheerful doer. It is a gladness to the Spirit of Grace when those pure loving words of His refine a coarse nature, or persuade a stubborn will, or heal a broken heart. It is a delight to the Most High when His own truth credited leads any soul to regard Him trustfully and loyally, and to cry to Him, Abba,—our Father who art in heaven. The Author of the Bible is not like one who publishes a great book, and so far as he is concerned its influence is posthumous: but He is rather like one who sends a letter into your dwelling and awaits its result. He is rather like one who has indited a volume with an eye expressly to your benefit, and who finds his joy fulfilled and his purpose answered when you begin to bend to its reasonings, to mould

your life on its maxims, to fill your soul with its inspiring motives. Under God's eye read God's own Book, and pray for that Comforter's teaching who can make the literal Scripture a living message and a transforming power. Then,—when your principles and rules of action are derived from this celestial source, you will understand how a man by becoming truly scriptural becomes “a temple of the Holy Ghost.” And, if you cannot say it yourself, when Christ's Word dwells in you richly, you will understand how another could say it, “I live, yet not I: Christ liveth in me.” Believing God's truth and receiving God's Spirit, as long as the Lord lives you need never want a friend, nor as long as He has a cause in the world, need you ever want a pursuit.

As we said in the last chapter, it is the darkness which makes the lantern so welcome. And it is the darkness of the sick-room or the house of mourning in which this “Night-lamp”* emits such a soft and heavenly radiance. You will find it so. Fond as you are of books, there is only one that you will value at last: with your head on the pillow you will hardly care to be told that a new volume of the Great History is published, or a marvellous epic out-peering all its predecessors. “No; read me the twenty-third Psalm.

* The appropriate name of a very edifying narrative of a sister's last days, by Dr John Macfarlane.

Let me hear the fourteenth of John." When your strength sinks yet lower,—when your interest in all under the sun has faded away, and ebbing life affords not even a parting tear,—it will for a moment rally the worn faculties, to hear the whisper, "My flesh and my heart faileth : but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." And when all is over, when to orphan children and desolate kindred the world is grown a great sepulchre, and the most tender friends are vain comforters ; when letters of condolence lie unopened, and words of compassion fall like hailstones on the heart,—the first thing which sends a warm ray into the gloom, and brings to the eye tears that are not bitter, is when Jesus himself breaks the silence, and you hear, "I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "What are these who are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple : and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither

thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

By the confession of the world's own poet, "Christianity is the religion of the sorrowful." * Nothing can be truer. Christ is indeed the mourner's Friend. Christ's Word is the "Afflicted Man's Companion." And if any humane spirit would like to mitigate the distresses of his brethren ; if you would fain be a son of consolation to the sons of sorrow, the kindest thing you can do is to conduct them to this source of perennial comfort. The world is full of sufferers : and if you do not meet them in the streets, city missionaries and others will soon direct you to their dwellings. There, or in the public hospital, you will find them, bed-ridden, consumptive, palsy-stricken, blind, wasting away in direful diseases ; and what can you do for them ? What can philosophy do ? What can mere human philanthropy do ? The one would discourse on the pain-conquering power of a resolute will, or would expatiate on the lot of mortality :—as if writhing anguish could be mesmerised by stoic saws, or a fever could be cured by fatalism. And the other, wiser and

* Moore in "The Epicurean."

kinder, would seek for the tossing sufferer better attendance, or purer air, or a less uneasy couch ; but it is a short limit to which when humanity has gone, it can go no further. The best skill cannot cure old age ; the rarest cordial cannot tempt the sickly palate ; the purest air, the softest couch, the kindest nursing cannot conjure into health those that are doomed to die. But in His mercy God has provided an assuagement for such misery,—an effectual antidote to the worst ingredient in the cup of woe. Visiting your poor neighbour, you will probably find that antidote already in the house, but its value is still unknown. It is your privilege to be the ministering angel, and to point out to the dying Hagar the hidden well. Putting into the words as much of Christ's own tenderness and kindness as you can, you read or repeat some appropriate passage ; and, just as the scanty strength can bear it, you add here a little and there a little, and renew your visits till, in an arrested ear and opening heart, God crowns your love and answers your prayers. And those only who have seen it can tell the difference between the sick-chamber where there is no hope, and one lit up with immortality—between the dull endurance or the rebellious resistance of the stricken transgressor, and the patient cheerfulness and prophetic joy of a Lazarus, whose sorry couch is spread in glory's vestibule. So that

next to his highest service who preoccupies with scriptural principle a healthful youthful neighbour, and who thus secures for society a Christian citizen, as well as for heaven a meet inheritor,—is his visit of mercy who carries to the abodes of wretchedness the tidings of great joy, and who, with the help of the Holy Spirit reveals the secret which makes the worst pain tolerable, and the sorest affliction joyful,—which beguiles with songs the longest night, and teaches the man of sorrow alway to triumph through Jesus Christ.





CHAPTER III.

THE BIBLE AND THE INVALID.

SALMASIUS was perhaps the most learned man in all the seventeenth century. He had read not only books, but libraries ; and yet, when he came to die, it was his bitter exclamation, " Oh, I have lost a world of time ! Had I but one year longer, it should be spent in reading David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles." Wheresoever the Bible may be despised, it is sure of a respectful welcome in the sick-room ; and however stalwart the intellect, however sturdy the gait of healthy days may have been, there is no comfort in the valley, without the sustaining of this staff. Some Christians stand forth from their fellows, conspicuous for moral energy or mental vigour ; but in those solemn hours, there is nothing left for any but to fall back on the faithful saying. There have been few braver spirits than John Knox ; few steadier thinkers than John Foster ;

but the biographer of the latter tells us, that “during the last two or three days of his life, the Scriptures (chiefly the Psalms) were by his own desire exclusively read to him ;” and when Knox was laid on his death-bed, along with other portions, he made his attendants read to him every day the fifty-third of Isaiah and the seventeenth of John.

The late Mrs Isabella Graham of New York had compiled for her own use a little collection of scriptures and hymns, which she entitled “Provision for my Last Journey through the Wilderness, and Passage over Jordan.” And whether collected into a manual or not, it is well to have at command those portions of the Word which, thoroughly trusted in the faintest hour, will be “everlasting arms” around the spirit. For such purposes none are so suitable as the simplest announcements of God’s forgiving and fatherly mercy,—those gospels of His grace which constitute the pre-eminence and the charm of the scriptural revelation. Short and plain, they are divinely adapted to the languid powers of sickness ; or, should there be a capacity for more sustained attention, the gentle words of the Saviour, and the soft breathings of the psalmist, will fall on the ear more soothingly than the accents of the most tender human comforter.

However, the sickness may not be “unto

death ;" at least so gentle is its progress, and so slowly do its stages succeed one another, that the house appointed for all living is a terminus far off and rarely remembered. You have little pain ; you are only very feeble ? Or, you have paroxysms of severe suffering, but with long intervals of ease ? You hope to get better ? Or, you fear that you will not ? We do not know how it is with the frail body ; only you are an invalid. And in that circumstance you have a special call to acquaint yourself with the Word of God ; and for attaining this acquaintance you have a great advantage. God in His providence is now saying, " Arise ; this is not your rest ;" and by secluding you from distracting occupations or giddy friends, He is giving you a rare opportunity to commence that acquaintance with Himself which will make you blessed now and ever.

In his old age Carsten Niebuhr, the great traveller, was blind ; but, as he lay on his bed or reposed in his easy-chair, his face would be often luminous with an inward joy. He was meditating on the splendid scenes which he had so often viewed in the sunny Eastern land : and as its glowing landscapes and its brilliant starry vault rose again from the depths of his memory, he feared for them no eclipse, and never missed the flat marshes of Holstein. And so, dear reader, should God open your eyes to the won-

ders of His Word, you will not be resourceless though all other joys are cut off. You will grow intimate with patriarchs, and apostles, and other noble acquaintances whose names are in the Book, and whose present abode is in the many mansions. You will get to know a Friend whose earthly history is in the Book, and whose present home is at the right hand of the Father ;—a Friend who, when the midnight taper reveals nothing save an empty room, is still so nigh that He can hear your softest whisper : and were you breathing forth your spirit in the silence, would bear it instantly to the bosom of immortality, and introduce it to the white-robed company. You will become familiar with the New Jerusalem, and the tree of life, and the pearly gates, and the crystal river. And, mayhap, as you meditate on these, and as you essay to think on the glorious perfections of the great I Am, and as you muse on the paradise that was, and on the new earth that is coming, and as precious promises crowd round you, each with an earnest in its arms,—amidst the bliss of believing God's truth and the joy of enduring God's will, you may get such songs in the night as never were heard in the halls of the worldling, and the visions of God will eclipse all the pageants of time.

So was it with a happy sufferer whose history we lately read. Poor and dependent, for six-and-

thirty years the victim of incurable maladies, often undergoing excruciating agony, sometimes for a lengthened period blind, few have experienced the exquisite enjoyment of which her shattered tenement was the habitual abode. As she wrote to a friend, "My nights are very pleasant in general. I feel like David when he said, 'I wait for the Lord ; my soul doth wait : and in His Word do I hope.' And while I am enabled to contemplate the wonders of redeeming grace and love, the hours pass swiftly on, and the morn appears even before I am aware." "I experience so much of the Saviour's love in supporting me under pain, that I cannot fear its increase." Once, when a lady, shuddering at the spectacle of her sufferings, said that if called to endure such pain herself her faith must fail, Harriet quoted the text, "Strengthened with all might, unto all long-suffering with joyfulness," and added, "Yes : and I think this is one end to be answered in my long afflictions—*encouragement* for others to trust in Him. This precious Book is my constant companion, and its truths and promises my unfailing support."*

* "Gold Tried in the Fire : a Memoir of Harriet Stoneman."





CHAPTER IV.

LESSONS IN THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE—THE CHEQUE AND THE COUNTERFOIL.

THERE are many ways in which intelligent readers have come to the conclusion that the books of Scripture are genuine, that their narrative is authentic, and that the message which they carry to mankind is indeed the Word of the living God. Some of these proofs require a certain amount of erudition in order to feel their force, or considerable powers of attention in order to follow the argument ; but others are so obvious that he who runs may read. Nor should it ever be forgotten, that to the sound mind Christ is His own witness, and Christianity carries its own commendation. There is also a class of proofs intrinsic to the Bible itself, which to the most of minds are very conclusive when rightly brought out, and which are all the more valuable, because they need no

read and run

cumbrous apparatus of external evidence. Of these we shall try to give an example in this and the following chapters.

Coming home, a ship's company describes a remarkable scene which it has witnessed in the course of its wanderings. Discredited by some and believed by others, the deponents adhere to their statement with wonderful tenacity; nor can imprisonment and torture induce them to alter a single iota. After they are dead, and when all evidence is converging towards the truth of their story, many regret that they can no longer see and cross-question the original narrators. However, it turns out that in a public collection are sundry pictures containing an elaborate representation of the controverted incident, and believed to be the work of some of the spectators, or exact facsimiles from their originals. In settling the dispute, it is obvious that great interest will attach to these drawings, and it will be a matter of the utmost moment to ascertain their trustworthiness. Are they not modern forgeries? Do they contain no fatal incongruities? no anachronism in costume? no solecism in the landscape, or the objects which people it? and are they not flagrant copies the one from the other?—all four the same cunning fable in so many different disguises?

No, says the artist: they are not modern.

They are as old as the time they profess. Their transmission is straightforward and abundantly established; and, even though there were no other proof, I know their antiquity from their style, and from the pigments and vehicles employed in their production.

No, say the physical geographer and the antiquary: they are true to the given time and place. That is the exact aspect of the country, and those are its characteristic birds and flowers. And this is the dress of the period; and some of the personages introduced I can recognise as contemporaries, and very correctly represented they are.

No, says the critic: they do not copy one another. Some of them may have used pre-existing sketches, or they may have had access to certain materials in common. But they are all distinct and independent; and some of them, at least, have drawn from the life. They give traits and details which would never occur to any but an actual observer.

So says the scholar: The Gospels are as old as the commencement of the Christian era. For the professed antiquity of no books is the documentary evidence so abundant: but even though all manuscripts and versions were destroyed, their very speech bewrayeth them. Their language is the Greek of Galileans. After the first centuries that Hellenistic dialect ceased to

be spoken by any people ; and, after it became a dead language, to write in it such books as we now possess, would have required a scholarship almost supernatural. We can have no more pictures the same as these ; for the very pigment which makes them so peculiar has perished.

We agree with you, say the naturalist and the archæologist : they are true to the region they represent. The Gospels are still written on the face of Palestine. To return to your comparison,—they remind me of a picture where, in representing some remarkable coloured strata, that there might be no dispute as to the truth of the tinting, the artist had actually painted with specimens of the several rocks finely pounded. In these Hebrew sketches I recognise the very dust and stones of Zion ; and I have no manner of doubt that they are the work of Jews anterior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

And asked to pronounce on these old pictures, how does the critic proceed ?

Setting them side by side, he is first of all struck by the different style of all the four. Each artist has his own affinities,—an eye for something which another overlooks,—his own touch and impasto and finish. This first, with his careful draughtmanship and scientific exactitude, is a manifest systematist, and gives every object as a philosopher would see it. That other, more eclectic, is withal more picturesque ; and

his pencil everywhere scatters the expressive minutiae and the happy hits of the descriptive poet. In the masterly perspective, the wavy flow, and the skilful grouping of the third, you recognise the practised strokes and pleasing effects of the accomplished limner. Whilst in the flaming fragments of the fourth,—in the empyrean background, and in the warm air and summer joy of the nearer distances, as also in the divine animation with which the canvas heaves and palpitates, you perceive a soul which had life abundantly, and which labours to convey a glimpse of its own glorious vision, only grudging the imperfection of all material vehicles. Each is distinct and independent. Each could repeat himself in manifold variety ; but not one of all the four could pass for his neighbour.

Laying the four Gospels alongside of one another, you observe the Hebrew instincts of St Matthew. With heraldic accuracy the commencement of his narrative is a long genealogy, supremely interesting to a nation compared with whose youngest family our British Percies and Howards are men of yesterday. Then with a sort of black-letter fondness for precedent, or rather with a believing Israelite's reverence for prophetic Scripture, ever and anon he is repeating, "As it is written,"—"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." And

in the large collection of parables, so pleasing to Eastern readers ; in the recital of those miracles which especially attested the Messiahship of Jesus ; and in the prominence given to incidents and discourses which throw light on the "Root and Offspring of David," you discern the Hebrew of the Hebrews,—the Jewish historian, so systematic, so scriptural, so conscious of his country.

Almost as Western as Matthew is Eastern, Mark gives the Syriac *Abbas*, and *Ephphathas*, and *Talitha-cumis*, along with their translation ; and "centurions," "speculators," "quadrantes," or farthings, are set down or explained just as they would have been by a Greek or Roman Jew returning to Palestine. But still more characteristic are his selection of striking incidents and the vivid precision of his picturesque language. The shortest of all the evangelists, he is nevertheless the most graphic ; and his work may be compared to the cabinet picture of a true master of the old Netherlands school,—sharp in its outline, full without crowding, and clear in its lucid compactness. And like such a master, too, a touch will often add another feature ; an expressive dot will light up a wide surface with new significance. It was "green grass" on which the multitude was made to sit down ; it was at a "place where two ways met" that the colt would be found which the disciples were

to bring to their Master ; not only did a young ruler come to ask a question at Jesus, but he came "running and kneeling down ;" not only was our Lord forty days in the wilderness, but He was "there with the wild beasts ;" not only did He slumber in the tempest-tossed vessel, but He lay "in the hinder part of the ship asleep upon a pillow ;" not only did He suffer the little children to come to Him, but He was "much displeased" with those who forbade them, "and He took them up in His arms, put His hand upon them, and blessed them."*

Then, with his elegant exordium, comes a fluent and skilful biographer, whose orderly sequence aids the memory, as much as his graceful periods charm the ear. Not professing to be autoptical, but claiming a "perfect understanding of all the incidents from the very first," from the materials which "eye-witnesses" supplied he has compiled a narrative continuous and lively, and worthy of an accomplished historian—though ever and anon professional allusions and the recurrence of medical terms remind us of "Luke, the beloved physician."

Need we—can we characterise the picture with which the series ends? Omitting every parable, and recording those miracles only in which the heart as well as the power of his Master was exhibited ; detailing at length His

* "The Literary History of the New Testament," p. 41.

conversations and His confidential addresses to His followers, as well as the various traits of majesty or tenderness which had most deeply impressed the narrator's own mind, from its transcendent commencement to its touching close, it is a mighty effort to perpetuate the grace and truth which came in Jesus Christ: whilst over the whole there hovers an atmosphere of "joyful solemnity"* and seraphic benevolence, itself sufficient to show that the author was once in contact with the heavenly Original.

Such is the first inference which we draw from this comparison of the four Gospels. They are not four productions of one biographer, but each is the work of a distinct individual. In other words, there are four evangelists as well as four Gospels. To say nothing of external evidence, but judging entirely from their intrinsic style and manner, especially when read in the original, these four memoirs are the work of *four separate biographers*.

Looking at them again, we are struck with their *circumstantial minuteness*. One canvas may be more crowded than another; but each of them contains, perhaps, a hundred heads, and many of them with very decided and definite features. Not only is the great central object carefully depicted in all, but there is no tendency to slur over, in safe and shadowy vagueness, the

† Da Costa.

subordinate and accessory figures. Each is given fresh and firm, and with the precision of those who had the original before them. Looking at these historic sketches, you instantly observe the copiousness of truth and the exactitude of personal information. Romancers lay the scene in a distant region or a departed time; the evangelists recount events happening in their own country and in their living day. And deceivers confine the story to their own immediate coterie, and take care to introduce no names which might be apt to resent the fraud and publish the imposition. But, strong in conscious truthfulness, the evangelists abound in dates, and in names of well-known persons and places. Jerusalem, and Jericho, and Nazareth, are introduced as freely as Capernaum or Bethsaida; men in public station, like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, and hostile personages, like Annas and Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, the Herods and Herodias, are brought in with no more hesitation than Peter, and James, and John. Miracles do not happen to nameless people in unknown regions; but it is on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, and on the eve of a memorable Passover, that Bartimeus, the blind beggar, the son of Timeus, is restored to sight; and it is at Bethany, a village two miles from the capital, that a few days afterwards Lazarus is recalled from the tomb. Everything is distinct and ex-

press ; and having nothing to fear from contradiction, by multiplying incidents, and by introducing well-known persons and places, they put it in the power of every contemporary to ascertain the truth of their testimony.

Surveying our pictures once more, we are finally struck with sundry *delicate and undesigned coincidences* between them ; and when we say "delicate and undesigned," we purposely exclude those obvious and outstanding features which could scarcely elude the notice of even a copyist ; but we refer to those little and recondite ingredients which can only occur in sketches direct from the original. For instance, in numbers One and Two this gray speck might pass for a stone or a sheep, and it is only when we refer to number Three that we find it is meant for a human figure. In a corner of one picture is what seems to be a single tree ; in another, a lozenge of light opens through the trunk ; and in a third sketch, the perforated bole resolves into two distinct trees planted near to one another. And as these remote agreements and recondite mutual illustrations successively arise to our earnest gaze, the conviction grows at last irresistible, that whatever they may have known of one another, there was a common original to which the artists were indebted alike for their variations and their concord. When we take up the evangelists, we are struck with that free

and independent way in which each gives his version of events, as if secure that his statement will speak for itself, and no less confident in the veracity of his several colleagues. He shows no nervousness as to his reception. He makes no effort to soften down what is strange, or to give extra effect to what is surprising. He offers no explanation to make his narrative tally with some previous history, or to establish its own self-consistency. But, on the other hand, there is occasionally a seeming contradiction ; a pre-emption of particulars, or a condensation of incidents, or a peculiarity in the spectator's standing-point, which gives the narrative all the air of a meaningless tale, or an entirely different story, till a careful comparison supplies the gap and completes the harmony.

For instance, in his account of the crucifixion, Matthew tells that "the soldiers smote Jesus with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" And in this challenge there seems nothing very difficult, and we could not have seen the force of the insult nor the meaning of the passage, had not another evangelist written down, "*And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, saying, Prophecy, Who is it that smote thee?*" (Luke xxii. 64.)*

* See the Rev. J. J. Blunt on "The Veracity of the Gospel, and Acts of the Apostles." In this work, and its companion

All the evangelists agree in telling, that when the high priest's officers came out to arrest Jesus, Peter drew a sword, and smote off a servant's ear. And yet both Matthew and Mark agree in relating, that when Christ's persecutors sought all sorts of evidence against Him, so as to make out a case before the Roman governor, they could procure none. But is it not very strange, that when the high priest had in his own palace such a striking proof of the violent character and dangerous designs of these Galileans, he should not have called as a witness his own wounded servant? Had we possessed no information beyond the narratives of Matthew and Mark, this would have been a flagrant difficulty. You say that the whole effort of the priests was to prejudice Pilate against Jesus, as a seditious and turbulent character; but they could substantiate nothing. Why was not this recent and conclusive witness forthcoming? Especially when Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, *then would my servants fight*, that I should not be delivered to the Jews,"—why did none of His accusers reply, "Yes, but your servants did fight, and one of them has inflicted a wound on

volume on the Five Books of Moses, in the "*Horæ Paulinæ*" of Paley, and the Rev. T. R. Birks's ingenious Supplement, the reader will find these undesigned coincidences accumulated to an amount absolutely overwhelming.

the sacred person of the high priest's servant?" Now, had we possessed no Gospels except these two, we could not have accounted for so strange an oversight on the part of the priestly faction. But Luke mentions a circumstance which sufficiently explains it. From his account we find, that as soon as Peter smote off the ear *Jesus healed it again*; and by doing this He effectually disqualified the wounded servant from appearing as a witness against Him. The priests were in this dilemma. If next morning they produced the servant as a proof of the violence of Christ and His followers, how could Pilate credit them? That wound was never inflicted overnight, or it could not be cured so soon. Or if, to explain this latter circumstance, they acknowledged that Christ had instantaneously healed it, they would at once have trod on dangerous ground, and would have given Pilate another reason for suspecting—what he was already very apt to surmise—the superhuman character of his prisoner.

In Matthew (viii. 16) we read, that "when the even was come they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils, and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick." But why was it *evening* when they brought to Jesus those demoniacs and sick persons? From Mark (i. 21, 32) we find that it was the Sabbath-day; and from Luke (xiii.

14) we find that the Jews thought it sinful for "men to come and be healed on the Sabbath-day." But we also know that the Jewish Sabbath ceased at sunset; so that when the evening was come the people would feel no scruple in bringing their afflicted friends to Jesus to be healed. But observe how far we have to travel before we can complete Matthew's simple statement. He merely mentions that it was in the evening Jesus wrought these cures; and had we possessed Matthew's narrative alone, we might have laid no particular stress on the time of day. But we go on to Mark, and we find that it was the Sabbath evening, "when the sun was set." And we go on to Luke, and find, though in a totally different connexion, that these Jews would have thought it very wicked to carry the sick or to accept a cure on the Sabbath. And it is just because the particulars are so minute that the coincidence is so valuable. They are just such trifles which a true historian is apt to omit, and just such trifles that a fabricator would never think of supplying. Or if we could imagine a forger systematically attempting to complete the omissions of his predecessor, he would not deposit his supplemental information in nooks and by-paths, where ages might elapse before it was discovered; but he would exhibit his *addendum* in some conspicuous position, and would take

care that it should arrest the reader's attention.

The more delicate these coincidences are, the surer is the inference from them. If you were comparing a cheque with the cheque-book from which it was said to be taken, and found not only the cut portion to correspond with the counterfoil, but if on microscopic examination the torn corner finely coincided,—if you found its rough and ragged edge and each riven fibre to match exactly the surface from which it was said to be sundered, you could no longer doubt that the piece of paper in your hand had been taken from that book. And these delicate agreements of one evangelist with another show that their story is an extract from the Book of Truth,—a leaf from the volume of actual occurrences,—a derivation from a counterpart original. The evangelist John tells us, (vi. 5,) that on one occasion, when surrounded by a weary multitude, Jesus said, “Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” And in putting this question He addressed Himself to Philip. But John hints no reason why He should have put this inquiry to Philip rather than to any other apostle. Luke, however, (ix. 10,) mentions that the place was a desert near to Bethsaida; and John himself happens to have mentioned, in the opening of his Gospel, (i. 44,) that Bethsaida was the city of Philip. And laying these three

insulated passages together, we see how natural it was to put the question, "Where is bread to be bought?" to one acquainted with the neighbourhood. Had we not possessed John's Gospel, we should never have known that such a question was asked; and had we not possessed Luke's Gospel, we should never have seen the special propriety of asking it at Philip.

We have chosen these examples because in them the truth of certain miracles happens to be implicated. If the coincidences now quoted be real and undesigned, then, not only are they an irresistible argument for the truth of the collective narrative, but they establish directly as facts the healing of Malchus's ear, the cure of many sick and demoniacs, and the miraculous feeding of the multitude with five loaves and two fishes,—for it is in the recital of these miracles that those coincidences, so truth-vouching, occur. And if, again, these miracles be true, then is Jesus all that He professed,—for it was in support of His claims as Messiah that He wrought these miracles.

But from the Gospels we may transfer this test to other portions of the New Testament. We have there a book mainly occupied with the travels of St Paul; and alongside of it we have thirteen Epistles ascribed to the same apostle. Now, even supposing that the author of the Epistles and the author of the Acts

were the same individual, it has been triumphantly shown, by a sort of microscopical survey, that nothing but scrupulous truth or omniscient falsehood could account for the complex and involute agreement which subsists between them. To detect these latent harmonies was, perhaps, the greatest service to historic Christianity which acumen and sound sense united have ever rendered; and though it is impossible to offer any abstract here, we may safely congratulate as proof against circumstantial evidence the sceptic who reads the "*Horæ Paulinæ*," and still doubts whether such a man as Paul existed, whether his Epistles be genuine, and whether the Acts of the Apostles be true.

We have often visited the ruins of a famous castle, with which, no doubt, many of our readers are well acquainted. Long ago it was captured, and that it might never be a stronghold to the patriots of Germany again, the enemy burnt it and blew up the walls. But in the weedy foss is still shown a huge fragment of a tower, which, when exploded, alighted there; and in the goodly joining of its stones and the hardening of its ancient mortar such a rocky mass had it become, that when lifted from its base, instead of descending in a shower of rubbish, it came down superbly a tower still. And, like that massy keep, the books we have been considering are so knit together in their exquisite

accuracy, the histories are so riveted to one another, and the epistles so mortised into the histories,—and the very substance of epistles and histories alike is so penetrated by that cement of all-pervasive reality, that the whole now forms an indissoluble concrete. And though all coeval literature had perished,—though all the external confirmations were destroyed,—though all the monuments of antiquity were annihilated, strong in its intrinsic truthfulness, the New Testament would still hold its lofty place—a tower of self-sustaining integrity. And though the efforts of enmity were to succeed as they have signally failed,—though learned hostility were to undermine its documentary foundations, and blow up that evidence of manuscripts and early versions on which it securely reposes, so finely do its facts fit into one another, so strongly are its several portions clamped together, and in the penetration and interfusion through all its parts of its ultimate inspiring Authorship, into such a homogeneous structure has it consolidated, that it would come down again on its own basis, shifted, but nowise shattered. Such a book has God made the Bible, that, whatever theories wax popular, or whatever systems explode, “the Scripture cannot be broken.”



CHAPTER V.

LESSONS IN THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE—THE MOULD AND THE MEDALLION.

FOR understanding some subjects, and for appreciating some kinds of evidence, a special education is requisite. In order to understand the true theory of the planetary system, the mind must be prepared by a knowledge of mathematics. The Newtonian system would still be the true theory of the universe, even although no mortal could appreciate the proofs on which it rests : but where there exists a competent knowledge of geometry, and where the celestial phenomena are adequately observed, the doctrine of gravitation forces itself on every sane and unprejudiced understanding. In other words, it sometimes needs one truth to pave the way for another.

When the Most High was about to introduce into the world the most important of all revela-

tions, He prepared a receptacle on purpose for it. He selected a "peculiar people," and by a lengthened process of instruction He fitted them for understanding His final message, and for giving the first welcome to the world's Redeemer.

Had the Advent taken place in Italy or Greece, or in ancient Britain, we can scarcely see how the Saviour could have made His meaning understood, or how He could have demonstrated His celestial mission. Believing in a thousand deities,—believing, too, that heroes and patriots had often been promoted to a place among the gods, had Jesus appeared in such a nation working His miracles of mercy, it would have been supposed that He was just another Hercules or Esculapius, or a god come down in the likeness of men, and who would again go back to His native Olympus. With a most imperfect ethics,—perceiving little harm in fraud and covetousness, in lust and falsehood, and practising without remorse the most atrocious of crimes,—they had scarcely first principles sufficient to appreciate the heavenly morality of the Mount of Beatitudes, and had nothing of that "conscience of sin" which longs for a Saviour. And possessed of no prophecies,—taught by no Moses or Isaiah,—they neither looked out for a Messiah, nor did they know the tokens by which to distinguish Him when once He appeared.

But for this greatest event of human history God prepared a people and a place ; He prepared the Hebrew people and the Holy Land.

First of all, He segregated the Hebrew race from all the nations of the world. Enclosing them within a *cordon* of rites and ceremonies more exclusive than any brazen wall, He planted them in Palestine, and through the long pagan ages He kept them dwelling quite alone. By a process as strange as it was wise and effective, He familiarised them with certain great ideas, and taught them those fundamental truths which it was essential that at least one nation should know.

He taught them that God is one ; that He is a spirit, infinite and omnipresent, the Creator of all things. And in teaching them the unity and spirituality of the Divine nature, He placed them on a platform immeasurably exalted above the whole of Heathendom. In the absolute and undoubting certainty that there is only one God, and that God is a spirit, infinite and eternal,—the starting-point of a Hebrew child was in advance of the theological goal of a Plato and a Seneca ; and in the mere absence of graven images, alongside of the intensest devotion, Palestine presented an aspect all the more impressive that it was entirely unique and unparalleled.

He taught them many of the Divine perfec-

tions. The gods of the nations were at the best immortal men,—heroic personages, with a mixture of human infirmities and superhuman powers. Most of them were deified monsters or canonised villains,—patrons of murder and theft, and every pollution; and it is no wonder that the worshippers of Kali and Bacchus grew nearly as vile as the almighty brutes whom they adored. But Israel knew that Jehovah is holy. They knew that the great Creator loves truth and purity, and that all His perfections are arrayed against the thief and the liar, the unchaste and untrue. They knew that God is righteous and faithful to His promises; that He is slow to anger and abundant in mercy. And though it was only a single psalm, like the 103d or the 139th, more true theology, more genuine devotion, more of child like faith in the Supreme, would be chanted any morning in the Temple in one such Hebrew hymn than could be compiled from the sacred songs of all the neighbouring bards from Hesiod and Homer down to Pindar and Callimachus.*

* The processes of this education have been illustrated in a work of remarkable freshness and power, which we recommend to all who have not yet read it, “*The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation. By an American Citizen.*” Nor can the historical books of the Old Testament be perused with thorough appreciation till the reader has his eyes open to this master-fact. It is only when he remembers the important end for which the Most High was teaching and training the “peculiar people,” that he

He gave them good precepts, and in the ten commands the Hebrews had a code the most simple, precise, and comprehensive which a people could desire, and issued with all the majestic sanctions of a legislation direct from Heaven.

He taught them the enormity of sin. Not that other nations had no sense of sin; but their apprehension of its demerit and its turpitude was faint, even when they felt its danger. But to the Israelite the law of the leper, the scape-goat, the morning and evening sacrifice, the Day of Atonement, and the perpetual ablutions and offerings, were so many mirrors; and in the focus where all the light concentrated was that dark and dreadful evil, *sin*. And of all men then existing, it was only from the heart of a Hebrew that such bitter cries could be wrung, "Have

can see the rationale of the Levitical code, with all its specifications of creatures clean and unclean; and it is only then that he can understand why judgments so severe and terrible followed acts of transgression. It was needful to wean the people from idolatry; and the plague which followed the erection of the golden calf was a sharp and signal lesson. It was all-important to give an impressive view of the Divine sanctity,—the immeasurable interval betwixt the sinful creature and the Holy One of Israel; and this impression was instantly produced by the fate of Korah and his confederates, and afterwards of Uzzah. It was essential that all should feel how the eyes of the Lord are everywhere, beholding the evil and the good; and how could Jehovah's omniscience be more effectually taught to a rude and half-reclaimed nation than by the detection and punishment of Achan?

mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness ; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

Yet He taught them that sin may be taken away. Such was the avowed significance of each expiatory offering ; and the two ideas,—sin, and a satisfaction for sin,—were involved in every sacrifice. We can easily imagine the emotions of a Nathanael, or other thoughtful Israelite, on his yearly visit to Jerusalem. From the battlements of the " Beautiful House," the silver trumpets have sounded their peaceful signal, and the mighty portals are flung open for the day. Already the courts are peopled with kneeling groups and solitary Simeons at their morning prayer ; and from the fagots on the burnished altar the flame leaps soft and pale to the sunshine ;—when, in his gorgeous robes, and with the Twelve Tribes flashing on his jewelled breastplate, the high priest solemnly advances, and a Levite leads forward a spotless lamb. It was touching to see it there, and to know its doom ; last week sporting amidst its fellows on the green pastures of Bethlehem, and now the only one of its species amidst this strange multitude, for whose fault it is about to suffer,—its unused footsteps slipping on the marble floor, but silent and unresisting. Over its head, on which he

lays his hands, the high priest confesses Israel's sins ; and then, taking from an attendant the sacrificial knife, next moment the poor firstling bleeds and dies. And as from the altar where it burns great clouds ascend, fragrant with wine and incense, the voice of praise and prayer rises loud and urgent ; and, the service ended, Aaron's successor turns to the prostrate worshippers, and uplifting his outspread hands, he says, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee : the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee : the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace,"—and amidst the loud amens the congregation separates, and the courts are clear. And so we might follow the wistful worshipper through the ceremonial of a Passover, or of a personal sin-offering : and in every sacrifice he would see a remembrance of sin. For just as the morning sacrifice reminded him that sure as the favoured land woke up, so depravity went forth to repeat its daily doings : just as the evening sacrifice told him that six hours had not elapsed till, from the fermenting surface of a nation's life, a miasma had again arisen, which needed prayers and sacrifice to disperse its wrath-attracting exhalations ; so the Passover proclaimed that, in the holiest home of all that Holy Land, there still was guilt sufficient to draw down Jehovah's ire, and that nothing could hold back the destroyer's sword save the sprinkled

sign,—at once a confession and a covert,—an acknowledgment of guilt, and an avowal of confidence in Jehovah's covenant : whilst, in like manner, the personal offering spoke the sad admission, "Against thee, thee only, have *I* sinned." But along with the suggested sinfulness, simultaneous and commingling, rose the idea of substitution. Still the victim, and that victim most frequently the lamb,—beautiful and free from blemish ; the lamb so patient and meek, so innocent and endearing, such a favourite everywhere, the gentle creature which you would like to carry in your bosom. But once more, the hand laid upon its head, and the guilt confessed,—once more, the glittering steel, the flowing blood, the dying struggle,—once more, the victim and the sacrifice. So that the same sacrifice which spoke of guilt published God's mercy. Along with the Divine displeasure, it gave a welcome hint of righteous reconciliation. It suggested a penalty, but a penalty which could be somehow transferred. And if to the transgressor it cried, "Behold your sin !" to the believing suppliant it audibly whispered, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes it away !"

Finally, in preparing a nation as the special shrine of the Advent, God sent to it many prophets. In predictions exceedingly numerous—and many of them remarkably precise—He gave the Jews tokens by which they might recognise

the Saviour when He came. His Divine Father, His mortal mother, His tribe, His family, His birthplace, the period of His appearing, His precursor, His miracles, His popularity, His betrayal, His cruel death in its minutest details, His reappearance in life, His ascension to heaven, and the wonders that should instantly follow,—all were so vividly described that for ages beforehand the Hebrews were furnished with ever so many “marks of Messiah.”

Thus peculiar were Palestine and its people; and such were the great truths to which, through a term of fifteen centuries, the Most High had been gradually conducting them; till at last the Holy Land had become the only oasis in a blighted world, the only Goshen amidst the heathen gloom. Of sound theology and of substantial morality, the Jews, however otherwise uninteresting, possessed a monopoly; and of all nations they alone had the means of acquiring those views of sin which awaken the desire of a Saviour. Theirs was the only land without an idol, and theirs the only one which boasted a revealed religion. The moral law was theirs, and theirs were all the prophets. And yet, with all their advantages, the Jews themselves were not a noble people. Generally speaking, they had no elevation of mind, no expansiveness, no spirituality. In the reign of the Cæsars they had become a morose and selfish community—

a set of noisy wranglers and repulsive fanatics. Could we suppose a philosopher like Seneca travelling in Syria about the year 25, we might imagine him writing,—“What a paradoxical people! Judging by the Greek version, there exists nothing comparable to their sacred books. Rules of virtue so strict, patterns of excellence so majestic, representations of the Deity so sublime, do not exist in any other literature. And they have many strange usages: a Sabbath every seventh day on which they do no work; sacrifices which they offer with very singular but affecting observances; many lustrations and intricate ceremonies. But the two most extraordinary features of this anomalous people remain to be noticed. There is not in all their land a single statue or image; and yet they are not atheists. On the contrary, no people can be more religious; but they fancy that any similitude, however costly or fair, would be an outrage on the infinite and invisible Deity. Their other peculiarity is this:—their sacred books teem with predictions of a great Deliverer, who, they think, will acquire for their country universal empire. He is suddenly to make his appearance in their temple at Jerusalem; and you cannot conceive with what intensity the expectation makes them cling to this temple; which, indeed, is in itself a fane of surpassing costliness and glory. At this very moment they are

on the tiptoe of expectation ; for they affirm that the time has arrived for this conqueror coming. We shall see. I confess that I am perplexed. I admire the theology and ethics of these Jews ; and sometimes, in their gorgeous temple, with its veiled but vacant sanctuary, amidst their ancient worship, I feel as if I could adore the Jehovah of Israel. But when I look to the Jews themselves, and say,—Is this the product of that lofty creed and spiritual worship ? these sour bigots and solemn triflers, these jabbering rabbis and snivelling pedants—are these the normal community,—the model people,—the optimist nation ? And when I see that such is revealed religion's masterpiece, I fall back upon philosophy, and am again the doubter."

Not so, Sir Sage. Not the normal people, but the pupil nation. Israel is God's scholar, but he is not meant to be the world's pattern. By a series of admirable lessons God has been educating this nation with a view to the Saviour's arrival ; and in His wonderful wisdom He has contrived it that were Messiah coming now, the mass of the people would instantly be moved, and yet He would obtain an enlightened welcome from only a small and wistful minority. The moment that His harbinger announces, "The kingdom is nigh !" you shall see the whole country stirred from end to end ; but when He adds,

“Behold the Lamb of God!” few will follow. And yet these few, in following Messias, will move the world. But were it in your Rome that the cry was raised, “The kingdom of God!” who would understand? and were any one proclaiming, “Behold the Lamb!” would not the magistrate confine him as a maniac?

No; not the model people, but the mould for a nobler dispensation. It is only amongst a people who believe the Divine unity and holiness that an Incarnation can answer its purpose. It is only amongst a people habituated to the ideas of substitution and expiation that a gospel, based on sacrifice and satisfaction for sin, can find its first footing. It is only amongst a people possessed of the prophetic marks of Messiah, that He can be expected before He arrives, and identified when at last He appears. Like one who looks at the dark mould into which the artist is about to pour the liquid alabaster, and he thinks, “How black! It will surely soil the fine material! And pray, what is the use of these sharp cuttings and deep indentations?” But the projection takes place, and as soon as the mass is set, there comes forth a copy from some great Master,—a Nativity, a Transfiguration, a Last Supper. You look at that Hebrew Institute, and you say, “Had it been the work of a Divine Artist, it had surely been fairer.” But you forget that it is only the matrix of a

forthcoming model: the pattern* of eventual Perfection. Every depression and indentation has its meaning. These strict precepts and stern prohibitions will only give brighter relief to the counterpart gospel; and the nicer and more numerous the lines, the more exquisite will the product appear. "Meats, and drinks, and new moons, and holy days, and sabbath days, are all shadows of things to come: but the body is of Christ." If you desire to know the meaning of this Hebrew Institute, you must look to Messiah. This land of greatest light has been prepared as His cradle. These prophecies are His credentials. That temple is the march-stone of the two dispensations, the limit which fixes His arrival, and on the hither side of which His coming must take place. That Old Testament is His text-book, and the pedestal of the national religiousness His pulpit. The very prejudices of the majority will be the means of accomplishing His great oblation, and the existing rites and sacrifices are the hieroglyphics which His one offering will finally expound. And when once that Advent is accomplished, the old Institute will be abolished. When once the medallion comes forth, the mould will be broken. No counterfeit can ever appear; for, exploding the temple, annihilating the royal family of Judah, and expelling every Hebrew

* Heb. ix. 23.

from the Holy Land, God in His providence will make it impossible for any one after His own Messiah to be born at Bethlehem, or to claim descent from David, or to come suddenly to the temple at Jerusalem. And having fulfilled their first function as the pupil nation and the pioneers of the Advent, but rejecting the mercy which they transmit to others, the Jews will survive as God's witnesses. Sullen and self-blinded, the old scholar will wander everywhere a reluctant evidence that Jesus is the Christ, and that the gospel is Divine.





CHAPTER VI.

THE MUSTARD SEED ; OR, THE GROWTH OF THE GOSPEL.

THE plant which yields mustard is pretty well known ; at least, every one knows the bright yellow flower which too often in the months of May and June makes the corn-fields golden. The hard black seed of that charlock, when crushed, is hot and pungent, and is extensively sold as mustard ; and the true mustards are species of the selfsame genus. In England they grow to a height of four or five feet, and in the warmer climate and rich soil of Palestine they become much taller and more luxuriant. Speaking of the progress which His gospel was destined to make, the Lord Jesus said, " The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, (or 'garden,') which is indeed the least of all seeds : but when it is grown, it is the greatest among

herbs and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

Few interpreters, however, are content with such an "herb" or vegetable. They want a literal "tree," with a wooden trunk, and large enough for birds to build nests in the branches. So they suggest the *Cissus arborea* and *Salvadora Persica*—trees which no man was likely to sow in his "garden," and which the original word would never suggest to a Greek or Hebrew hearer. Others, aware that *Sinapi* is the well-known herbaceous mustard-plant of husbandry, are naturally anxious to magnify it as much as possible. Thus Rabbi Simeon Ben Chalaphtha is frequently quoted, who says: "There was in my field a stalk of mustard, into which I was wont to climb, as men are wont to climb into a fig-tree." The Rabbi does not tell us his size, but either he himself must have been very small, or his powers of imagination very great.

If we look at Matt. xiii. 31, Mark iv. 31, and Luke xiii. 19, in the light of those locutions and usages which govern every language, we shall find no difficulty. This seed is sown, and when it is sprung up it becometh "greater than all herbs"—taller than the pulse and dill and other pot-herbs around it—in fact, "a tree;" so arborescent that the finches and other little birds which are so fond of its seeds alight in its branches. Not a word is said about their build-

ing their nests, as some have imagined: they simply perch or "lodge," (κατασκηνοῦν, "tabernacle;") and there is no need to picture up among the boughs an eagle, or ospray, or any such *rara avis* as Rabbi Simeon. The mustard is a little seed; but sown in a favourable soil it shoots up, and by and by can scarcely be called an herb: it is quite a tree, so that the birds which come to devour its seeds are hidden in the branches.

Such is the meaning of the words. Then for the purport of the parable. Some of the fathers take occasion from it to descant on the medicinal virtues of the substance itself. Augustine says that mustard has the power of expelling poison, and just as the mustard-plant overtopped the other herbs, so the true doctrine will outgrow and cast into the shade sectarian dogmas. Hilary remarks, that just as the sharp flavour of the mustard seed is brought out by tribulation—by crushing and grinding—so the efficacy of the gospel is brought out by persecution and affliction. The other "herbs" are the prophets, whose preaching was given to the weak and sickly Israelites; but the branches of the mustard-tree are the apostles, to whom—like little birds tossed in the tempest—the nations resort, and wearied with the storms raised by the prince of the power of the air, seek refuge in the branches.

All this may be ingenious, but it is quite irrelevant. The design of the parable is obvious. The underlying thought is simple and single. A little germ and a large result—a small commencement and a conspicuous growth—an obscure and tiny granule, followed by a vigorous vegetation—the “least of all seeds” and “the greatest of herbs”—such is the avowed contrast of the parable ; and the resemblance of this to the gospel, or the Christian dispensation, is the declared lesson of the Lord.

Is it not so when we glance at the history of real religion in the *world*, in *communities*, in the *individual soul*?

I. For instance : What a little and unlikely thing was the cradle of Bethlehem ! Most cradles come to nothing ; most infancies result in very ordinary specimens of upgrown humanity ; and to the outside spectator there was no particular promise in the cradle watched by that Hebrew mother. It was not a cot of ebony or ivory, curtained with tapestry and covered with some wonder of the loom, and beneath such silken canopy as guards and glorifies the slumbers of imperial infancy. It was placed in a stable, and was in fact the manger where a little while before the ox had munched his provender—cobwebs the canopy, a carpenter’s cloak the covering. Nothing could look liker the outset of an abject existence, the germ from which you

would expect a very poor and vulgar history to spring. Thirty years after you could only expect to find the occupant of that manger grown up into a rough, hard-handed, toil-worn man, tramping out and in among the boors of Bethlehem, tending these cattle like the foster-brother who had grown up among them, and exerting rude energy in feats of rustic sport or prowess.

Thirty years passed on, and the tender plant had grown up, the root out of a dry ground began to bud forth and blossom. Jesus was manifested to Israel—the Son of Mary had become the marvel of Palestine. In words such as earth had never heard, because man had never spoken, He was revealing the Father: He was bringing God into the abodes of men—into the hovel of the fisherman and the haunts of the trader; and with prodigies of power, such as seemed a natural accompaniment of supernatural sanctity, He was healing the sick, was raising the dead, was stilling the tempest, was feeding the hungry, and was on every side awakening the question, When Messias cometh, will He do greater miracles than this man doeth? Even so. Blade by blade and branch by branch the seedling of Heaven had expanded, till a shekinah was visible in its Burning Bush; and the child born in the stable, the infant cradled in Bethlehem's manger, answered to the name, Wonderful, Coun-

sellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Dark, hard, unlovely, there is no resemblance between that seed and the luxuriant plant so broad in its branches, in its blossoms so golden. Such a mustard seed was the Cross of Calvary. To those who had begun to look for redemption in Israel, that Cross was a crushing disappointment : to priests and Pharisees it was a source of savage exultation : to the rabble of Jerusalem it was an exciting spectacle, and the tragic finish of a strange career ; and whilst like a sword it pierced through Mary's soul, it was the tombstone under which disciples saw buried their hope and joy. The grain of seed fell into the ground and died. How different the scene two months thereafter ! Jesus by this time is risen : He has gone back to His glory : the Holy Ghost is given, and in the new light which from prophets and psalmists has broken forth, the gloom has cleared off Golgotha : Gethsemane's crushed and blood-stained sod comes out the battle-field, where the Captain of man's salvation has conquered ; and the Cross of Calvary, instead of the extinction of man's best hope, because the destruction of man's best Friend, stands forth the altar of the one accepted Sacrifice—the door of hope in our dark valley, the ladder with its foot on our sinful world, and heaven reconciled at its summit. Not two months, when this seed has begun to

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shoot forth gloriously. Not two months, when that Cross is lifted up, and looking to Him whom they have pierced, Jerusalem's inhabitants begin to weep. Again it is lifted up, and thousands more are melted. It travels out of Palestine, speeds across the seas, penetrates strange lands, and still God's Spirit goes with it. The savage, coarse and hisped, learns from it God's mercy, and rises from his knees a new, a mild, and gentle creature. The scorning sage, as he struts along, and with curled and contemptuous lip disdains mankind, espies its love divine, and conscious of a mysterious magic, a benignant balm which has got somewhere in about his heart, the great deep opens, a fountain begins to flow in his once arid but now dissolving nature, and he goes forth amidst his fellows, a sunshine in his face, and a hand open as day to melting charity. With red arms the robber clasps it, and in its mighty expiation the crimson turns to snow. With remorse already stinging, the blasphemer presses to his burning bosom the healing tree, and the undying worm is no longer there. In life's last hour, the awakened reprobate sees in Christ crucified the full range of God's mercy, and from the jaws of perdition is transported to Paradise. And thus, with the powers of darkness in its front, and an altered world behind it, the Cross of Christ moved on; and though some Jews stumbled,

and some Greeks were foolish, it soon proved itself to the various races of mankind God's saving power—till of all seeds the least and most unlikely had overtopped all other herbs—had outgrown the philosophies and supplanted the religions of the East and West, and sent out its branches to the world's end.

II. So with communities : so with the history of religion in given regions or localities. In the year 1789, the crew of the ship *Bounty* turned their captain and officers adrift and carried the ship away. After many adventures, the nine surviving mutineers landed in the little island of Pitcairn, with the heathen wives they had brought from Tahiti, and some Tahitian men. Their first years passed in quarrels and feuds, in drunken brawls and deliberate murders, till, in 1800, John Adams found himself the only man in all the island. His conscience was awakened by frightful dreams ; but though the island was cut off from all the world, happily he had a Bible and a Prayer-Book, which still remained from the stores of the old *Bounty*. By reading that Bible, he found how a sinner may obtain forgiveness ; and as the patriarch of the island, he set to work to instruct the children and the Tahitian women ; and such was his success, that when, in 1814, Captain Beechey visited Pitcairn, he found it peopled by a race virtuous, religious, cheerful, and hospitable beyond all precedent—

patterns of conjugal and filial affection, devoting the Sabbath entirely to reading and serious meditation and prayer, permitting no work to be done that day, and with a standard of truth so strict, that even irony was frowned on as a sort of falsehood; and all this truth, probity, and mutual affection had sprung from the single mustard seed, the one copy of the Scriptures, to which the awakened conscience of John Adams went for consolation.

Nearer home, but far out in the Western main, is a little island, round which for nearly half the year the Atlantic clangs his angry billows, keeping the handful of inhabitants close prisoners. Most of it is bleak and barren, but there is one little bay rimmed round with silvery sand and reflecting in its waters a slope of verdure. Towards this bay, one autumn evening, 1300 years ago, a rude vessel steered its course. It was a flimsy bark, no better than a huge basket of osiers covered over with the skins of beasts; but the tide was tranquil, and as the boatmen plied their oars, they raised the voice of psalms. Skimming across the bay, they beached their coracle and stepped on shore, one, two, three, as many as twelve or thirteen, and on the green slope built a few hasty huts and a tiny Christian temple. The freight of that little ship was the gospel, and the errand of the saintly strangers was to tell benighted heathen

about Jesus and His love. From the favoured soil of Ireland they had brought a grain of mustard-seed, and now they sowed it in Iona. In the conservatory of their little church it throve, till it was fit to be planted out on the neighbouring mainland. To the Picts with their tattooed faces, to the Druids peeping and muttering in their dismal groves, the missionaries preached the gospel. That gospel triumphed. The groves were felled, and where once they stood arose the house of prayer. Planted out on the bleak moorlands, the little seed became a mighty tree, so that the hills of Caledonia were covered with the shade; nor must Scotland ever forget the seedling of Iona, and the labours of Columba with his meek Culdees. And if God give the increase, who can tell to what mighty trees those little seedlings may grow, from that hardy nursery transplanted to Canada and Australia, to Calcutta and Amoy, to Caffraria and Old Calabar?

III. So with the rise and progress of religion in the individual soul. "The just shall live by faith"—a text so small, long latent in Luther's memory, and long dormant, when quickened by God's Spirit, became not only gladsome liberty to himself, but the germ of a glorious Reformation. And so, "a word, a thought, a passing sentence, may prove to be the little seed which eventually fills and shadows the whole heart and

being, and calls all thoughts, all passions, all delights to come and shelter under it.”*

A great encouragement to those who are teaching others. Whether it be your Sabbath scholars or your own children, it is not so important that they should commit to memory great quantities of Scripture, long chapters or long psalms, as that they should have indelibly engraven on their hearts a few of the most precious portions, psalms like the xxiii. and ciii., hymns like “Rock of Ages” and “I lay my sins on Jesus,” texts like those faithful sayings which proclaim the love of God, the cleansing blood of Christ, the power of believing prayer. A tract in the pocket, a Testament in the trunk, is a good thing, and may lead to the happiest results; but as the youth goes away and leaves you, a text in the memory is better—some great saving truth, terse and simple as it occurs in the lively oracles, or as it has been inwoven in immortal verse or more immortal music, or as it has been embalmed and made for ever sacred by some tender association—some touching incident or earnest exhortation. When the set time comes—in the distant colony, in the tropic ship, in the house of bondage, serving the citizen of a far country, and envying the husks which the swine do eat—that faded but familiar truth may return upon his memory, and, as he pon-

* Alford.

ders, long closed fountains of feeling may reopen, till the resolve is made, "I will arise and go to my Father."

And a great encouragement to those who are trying to find favour for any useful plan or good idea. As long as it remains in your own mind, it is the seed in the mustard pod ; but cast into the field, or the garden, it will grow. Thus David Nasmith's notion of a house to house visitation of the London poor has grown into those town and city missions which are the salt, the saving element, in our over-crowded centres. Thus the first Bible-woman has been repeated, till they are counted by hundreds. Thus John Pounds's little scapegrace, bribed by a hot potatoe to come for his daily lesson, has multiplied into our ragged schools, with their thousands of teachers, and myriads of scholars. Thus the system of total abstinence in the hands of Father Matthew reduced the whisky-drinking of Ireland from twelve millions of gallons in one year, to not more than five millions. And thus any true and living thing will grow, if it gets but a good and honest soil, and is so happy as to receive its fair proportion of sun and shower.

Which suggests our concluding thought—the treatment we ourselves should give the truths of God. An acorn on the mantel-piece, a dry bulb in a dark cupboard, a mustard seed in your pocket or a pill-box, will not grow. The

only crop you can hope for is from the seed which you cast into the ground, and take pains with, till it sends up first the tender blade, and by and by the branching stalk. So texts or truths in the memory, are acorns on the shelf, seeds in the pill-box. It is good to have them, but do not leave them there. Take out any one you like and plant it. Ponder the saying till it grows wonderful—till its meaning comes out, and you feel some amazement at its unsurmised significance. Ponder it, till, like the phosphorescent forms of vegetation, the light of its expanding falls on other passages, and revelation is itself revealed. Ponder it, till the smallest of seeds becomes the greatest of herbs, and a brief maxim of heavenly wisdom develops in your conduct a beauty of holiness. Ponder it, till like the bulb taken out of the cupboard, it is no longer dead and dry, but with the scent of water at its roots, and looking forth at your lattice from its pedestal of amethyst or beryl, it warms with summer hues the wintry weather, and sends through all the hidden chambers of your heart exotic perfume, suggestions of joys which even now exist elsewhere, though outside and around the trees are stripped, and the world is cold.



CHAPTER VII.

LEAVEN ; OR, THE CIVILISING INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

AFTER comparing the gospel or the Church to a grain of mustard seed, the Saviour added this other parable :—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." At the first glance, it might seem as if this were just the same thought repeated ; but a little attention will show us that the underlying idea of each parable is distinct, and so the one makes an absolute addition to the lesson of the other.

The mustard-tree is an organised body. It has a trunk and branches, it has leaves, it has fruit. It begins with a germ, and it goes on expanding. It requires sustenance, for it has life, and if it gets sustenance it grows. Like every plant, like every animal, it is an organism ; unlike a stone, unlike a heap of sand, unlike

that handful of meal, it has life and limbs, vitality and growth.

So the Church of Christ is a living and organised whole, of which a tree, with its roots and branches, its fruit and its shadow, is an excellent emblem. This organism springs from that germ called the gospel. This little seed is sown in God's garden, and, quickened by the Holy Spirit, it springs up and grows. In Iona, the preaching of Columba springs up the Church of the Culdees. In Germany, the preaching of Luther springs up the Evangelical or Protestant community. In the world itself, the preaching of apostles, the grain of mustard-seed deposited by the fishermen of Galilee, springs up the truest, oldest, widest, of all fellowships—the Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven—that grandest of all societies, of which dimly or distinctly we think when we say, “I believe in the communion of saints.”

But leaven is no organism, and for that matter neither is meal. Leaven is the little mass of sour and fermenting paste which in other days, and before the employment of yeast, the baker used to put into his dough, till it spread through the entire batch, and changed the whole into the likeness of itself. And although in the Bible leaven is frequently used to denote hypocrisy or malice, there is no reason why it should not be used to denote *any principle which spreads*

and penetrates, whether good or bad. And here there can be little doubt that it is intended to say, Christianity is a principle designed and fitted to influence the entire community. Although in the outset there may not be much of it, yet it has prodigious potency, and as it keeps on working it will more and more assimilate to its own nature all that is called society. It is not only the Christian who will bring to Christ the pagan or the profligate, but it is Christian truth, Christian feeling, Christian conduct, which will tell on the world's way of thinking and acting, and at last leave nothing in the whole lump of humanity which is not sensibly affected by this heaven-descended principle.

If so, the purport of the two parables is sufficiently distinct. The one describes the Church of Christ in its own separate identity and organic completeness, starting up from the soil of this world, yet not of it—every leaf and twig partaking the same nature, and in its surprising growth destined to overtop all competitors. The other describes Christianity as a *power* or *principle*—a little yeast or ferment to which God has given such potency, that it will go on permeating and assimilating the entire mass of humanity, till the whole is leavened. The one metaphor completes the other. The tree *grows*, the leaven *works*. The tree is a distinct living organism, the leaven is a power or influence. The Church

of Christ is the mustard-tree, the leaven is Christianity. Or, put it another way—If both the grain of seed and the leaven represent the gospel, in the one case we have the seed germinating and springing up in that separate, self-contained unity which we call the church of the saved—in the other, we have the potent and mysterious principle going out beyond itself into society, and materially affecting the world which surrounds the Church.

Put into modern language, we have here the assertion, *Christianity is the great civiliser*. This is a truth to which more justice has been done by historians than by divines ; still it is truth. No doubt there have been civilisations which were not Christian—the Greek and Roman, for example, and the Chinese and Indian, if we may give so grand a name to a grotesque and puerile culture. And in our modern civilisation there may be elements which are not purely or pre-eminently Christian—which are not essentially Christian at all. There is a classical element, for example—and an artistic element, and a very powerful commercial element—which have all their share in rescuing from barbarism, and which have all contributed to such refinement as the present age has reached. The great educator of the world is God himself, and the great text-book from which the lessons are taken, is the volume of His

“Lively Oracles ;” but there are pictures and object-lessons all round the walls—beasts, trees, volcanoes, geysers, large as life, pictures, statues, instruments of music ; and in the palæstra of actual existence the pupils are made to do a great deal in the way of moulding one another. Many of these pupils are very perverse, and many of the influences at work are intrusive and pernicious—not at all divine, but downright devilish ; still, the world which God has so loved, and for which He gave His Son, must never be abandoned to the wicked one ; and under its Divine Guide and Guardian it is interesting to notice the processes by which the gradual emancipation is going forward, and a groaning, but self-sold race, is being raised and restored to the liberty of sons of God.

There are certain facts which will not be disputed : There is a Bible in the world, and there is also a Church ; but although all men do not accept the Bible out and out, nor do all belong to the household of faith, yet through that Bible, and through that Church, Christ is the Benefactor of multitudes who nevertheless refuse to have “this Man to reign over them.”

Take, for instance, equity, shading off, as it does, into its kindred excellence, humanity. Says the apostle James, “Go to, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that are come upon you. Behold the hire of the labourers,

who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them who have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." And all throughout our Lord's discourses we find denunciations of those who devour widows' houses, and throughout the Old Testament prophets—those great preachers of righteousness—denunciations of those who grind the faces of the poor. And although there may be still sufficient fraud and rapacity, no one can conceive what Christianity has done for the poor and unprotected, who cannot throw himself back into the times before the advent, or who is not familiar with the condition of the dependent classes under Eastern despotisms. And it would have been the same in Europe, but Christianity stepped in. It said to the landed proprietor and the chieftain, "If you promise to pay, you must perform. If you take that man's time, or labour—if you take his ox or his ass—you must give him fair value in return. True, you are strong, and you call him your serf or vassal; but he has a Lord paramount as well as you, who is stronger than either, and before whose tribunal you both must stand." And thus, even in its most degenerate days, Christianity threw its shield over the poor and needy, and taking up the cause of him who had no helper, its leaven has so penetrated legislation, or rather we should say, has so pre-

meated that *opinion* which is the source of all effective and enduring legislation, that now not only is there no serfdom in Europe, but the day-labourer is as secure of his wages as the Crown is secure of its revenues.

“Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you.” This great gospel maxim has so infiltrated the mind of Europe, that it is current even amongst those who imperfectly practise it, and by its implied recognition of universal brotherhood, it is giving to the laws and to the ways of every land a complexion of fairness, of respect for one another’s rights, for one another’s feelings even, utterly unknown in lands where one race is clay and another porcelain, or one has descended from Bramah’s head or arm, another from his toe.

But if Christianity has thus supplied the place of a conscience to the world, so has it been the social heart, the great source of the world’s compassion and sympathy. What is to be done with our orphans? Let them shift for themselves, says Selfishness. What is to be done with our aged and invalid poor, and our imbeciles? Let them die off, and the sooner the better, says Political Economy; they are not in our plan, they spoil our calculations, they are very much in the way, and are best let alone. But if we let them alone, our religion won’t let *us* alone. The poor and the outcast were taken

up by Christ himself, and—"The poor ye always have with you"—were by Him transferred to the Church, when they should enjoy His bodily presence no longer. And not only has He made the care for their case a necessity of the Christian life—it is not over a solitary or selfish meal that you pray His prayer, "Give *us* this day our daily bread ;" and when you try to shut out from your compassion the brother who has need, you so far shut out the love of God—but He has made it an inevitable prompting of the Christian spirit ; and whether it be Pastor Fliedner, with the Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth, or the founders and supporters of our asylums for the orphan, for the idiot, for the incurable, or those who give their time to visit the sick, to instruct the ignorant, to raise up and restore the fallen, they are obeying an instinct as unknown to the polished Greek and sturdy Roman as it was to the phlegmatic Chinaman or effeminate Hindoo, but an instinct familiar to those whose own spirits have been melted by the matchless manifestation of the Divine benevolence, and who have learned to pray,

"As we to others mercy show,
We mercy beg from Heaven."

This Christian tenderness tells on the outside world. As a result of these two things in the midst of men—that great magazine of God's

mercies, the gospel, and that fund of actual loving-kindness which the Spirit of God maintains in the minds of His people—as a result of these things, the world is far less harsh and cruel than it used to be. A little leaven has pervaded the whole lump, and many men who are not devout are kind, generous, humane. Living in an atmosphere filled more or less with Christian feeling, and impelled by the contagious example of Christian friends or kindred—constrained by love to the men whom the love of Christ constrains—they are led on to do such noble deeds, and give such noble gifts, as would be no disgrace to Christian charity.

Equity or fairness is a Christian grace—that considerateness which puts a man in his neighbour's place, and does as he would be done by : and so is tenderness, compassion, self-sacrifice in saving the lost and relieving the wretched : and as a third excellence, thoroughly Christian, we might have instanced *Truth*. Unfortunately, the Church of Rome has found it needful to “lie for God,” and its frightful doctrine of “pious frauds” has occasionally received countenance in the controversial tricks and prophetic quackeries of Protestant divines : but it is not for nothing that the awful apparition of Ananias and Sapphira meets us so early in the Christian history ; and partly as a result of that solemn warning, and still more as the reflection of the

whole spirit of the gospel, wherever there has been genuine piety there has always been a notable measure of truth and God-fearing uprightness; and co-existent with this stricter veracity within the Church there may be discerned a keener sense of honour in the world. There is more than enough of fraud and falsehood still; but surely the number grows of those whose "word" is better than a bad man's "oath," and who, when they have sworn to their own hurt, stand by it. Even controversy is conducted with greater candour; men are getting more courage to confess their errors or their ignorance; and not only have statesmen been found bold enough to avow as their policy "a policy of peace," but wise enough to adopt a policy of openness and honesty.

Not only are they the Christian ethics which have got diffused through the morals of society, but the other ingredients of the gospel have also told. If you were asking a company of believing men, "What is the greatest benefit which Christianity has conferred on you?" one might answer, "New light. Whereas I once was blind, now I see. I see myself, lost and ruined, with a depraved nature and a soul destroyed by sin. And I see God. I see Him holy yet more than helpful: I see Him 'the just God and the Saviour,' infinitely pure, yet unspeakably compassionate, desiring my salvation,

and doing all things in the way of pardon and assistance which are needful to secure it. New light." A second might say, "It is new life that I owe to the gospel. It has given me a new Friend in Jesus Christ, a new motive in the love of God, a new prospect in the hope full of immortality." And a third, in reply to the question, "What has Christianity done for you?" might answer as truly, "It has given me a new nature. Things for which I once had no heart are now my element, and in that law of God I do delight which was once my terror and my task." Corresponding to such types of piety are the influences which Christianity exerts on those who have not yet come within its pale. The far regards and lofty aims of one high-hearted Christian, if they do not lift his neighbours to heaven, may at least raise them for a moment from the dust; and the courage of one who has faith in God and no fears for the future will sometimes animate feebler spirits in the hour of danger: just as God's presence with the believer helps to make Him real and present to the worldling. Like the drop of essence which flavours the pitcher—like the flask of attar which scents the whole chamber—like the hidden leaven which gives to the three measures a new attribute; though it is still a little flock, and the followers of Christ a mournful minority, the faith of this little Church keeps the world from

atheism, its blessed hope keeps the world from many a mad experiment, as well as from the demoralising blackness of despair, and its love, however limited, is a cheering, elevating influence, which, in the face of all selfish and utilitarian tendencies, maintains that sentiment which gives to society its meaning and its charm, and which, in the midst of materialistic influences, reminds it ever and anon of that higher sphere whence the sweet exotic comes.

You see your calling, Christian brother. You are here to serve Christ and extend His kingdom. Ye are the salt of the land, ye are the lights of the world, ye are the leaven which is to pervade and new-mould society. This end is so far answered when any man carries on his common work, his daily calling, on Christian principles. It is perhaps still more decidedly subserved when a man has a calling capable of being consecrated—as when the artist wields his pencil to exhibit the dangers and deformity of vice, the charms of domestic virtue, the majesty of Christian heroism—as when the man of letters employs his pen for the rebuke of popular evils, for the praise and protection of scriptural faith and piety. But it will also be subserved by those who, in the interests of heaven's kingdom, and in order to promote God's ascendancy, are steadily and unostentatiously employing the influence God has given.

It was not only gold, but frankincense and myrrh, which the Eastern sages presented to the new-come Saviour. You may have little gold to give, but myrrh in the bundle, incense in the censer, a good man's influence when living, his memory when gone, will go far in the way of fostering worth and restraining evil. You have such influence; use it. You are not a cypress, strict and straight up, with arms appressed and pointing all to heaven—like a hermit of the Theban desert, like some of the old English Puritans: your branches spread; let those who come under your shadow—your friends, your children—let them there find pleasant fruits and leaves of healing. And the gospel which makes you so rich and strong, it is not a mere amulet or charm which you carry about for your own protection, but a blessing with which you are intrusted for the world's welfare. So do not hoard it. Do not conceal your convictions, but on right occasions enforce your belief and urge your principles; and even though you may not in every instance succeed in saving a soul from death, it is something to dispel a single prejudice or prevent a single sin.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE LITERARY ATTRACTIONS OF THE BIBLE.

GOD made the present earth as the Home of Man ; but had He meant it as a mere lodging, a world less beautiful would have served the purpose. There was no need for the carpet of verdure, or the ceiling of blue ; no need for the mountains, and cataracts, and forests ; no need for the rainbow, no need for the flowers. A big, round island, half of it arable, and half of it pasture, with a clump of trees in one corner, and a magazine of fuel in another, might have held and fed ten millions of people ; and a hundred islands, all made on the same pattern, big and round, might have held and fed the population of the globe. But man is something more than the animal which wants lodging and food. He has a spiritual nature, full of keen perceptions and deep sympathies. He has an eye for the sublime and the beautiful, and his kind Creator has

provided man's abode with affluent materials for these nobler tastes. He has built Mont Blanc, and molten the lake in which its image sleeps. He has intoned Niagara's thunder, and has breathed the zephyr which sweeps its spray. He has shagged the steep with its cedars, and besprent the meadow with its king-cups and daisies. He has made it a world of fragrance and music,—a world of brightness and symmetry,—a world where the grand and the graceful, the awful and lovely; rejoice together. In fashioning the Home of Man, the Creator had an eye to something more than convenience, and built, not a barrack, but a palace,—not a Union-workhouse, but an Alhambra ; something which should not only be very comfortable, but very splendid and very fair ; something which should inspire the soul of its inhabitant, and even draw forth the “very good” of complacent Deity.

God also made the Bible as the Guide and Oracle of Man ; but had He meant it as a mere lesson-book of duty, a volume less various and less attractive would have answered every end. A few plain paragraphs, announcing God's own character and His disposition towards us sinners here on earth, mentioning the provision which He has made for our future happiness, and indicating the different duties which He would have us perform,—a few simple sentences would have sufficed to tell what God is, and what He would

have us to do. There was no need of the picturesque narrative and the majestic poem,—no need of the proverb, the story, and the psalm. A chapter of theology, and another of morals ; a short account of the Incarnation and the great Atonement, and a few pages of rules and directions for the Christian life, might have contained the vital essence of Scripture, and have supplied us with a Bible of simplest meaning and smallest size. And in that case the Bible would have been consulted only by those rare and wistful spirits to whom the great Hereafter is a subject of anxiety, who are really anxious to know what God is, and how they themselves may please Him. But in giving that Bible, its Divine Author had regard to the mind of man. He knew that man has more curiosity than piety, more taste than sanctity ; and that more persons are anxious to hear some new, or read some beautiful thing, than to read or hear about God and the Great Salvation. He knew that few would ever ask, What must I do to be saved ? till they came in contact with the Bible itself ; and, therefore, He made the Bible not only an instructive book, but an attractive one,—not only true, but enticing. He filled it with marvellous incident and engaging history ; with sunny pictures from Old-World scenery, and affecting anecdotes from the patriarch times. He replenished it with stately argument and thrilling verse, and

sprinkled it over with sententious wisdom and proverbial pungency. He made it a book of lofty thoughts and noble images,—a book of heavenly doctrine, but withal of earthly adaptation. In preparing a guide to immortality, Infinite Wisdom gave not a dictionary, nor a grammar, but a Bible—a book which, in trying to reach the heart of man, should captivate his taste ; and which, in transforming his affections, should also expand his intellect. The pearl is of great price ; but even the casket is of exquisite beauty. The sword is of ethereal temper, and nothing cuts so keen as its double edge ; but there are jewels on the hilt, an exquisite inlaying on the scabbard. The shekels are of the purest ore ; but even the scrip which contains them is of a texture more curious than any which the artists of earth can fashion. The apples are gold ; but even the basket is silver.

In speaking of the literary excellence of the Holy Scriptures, we are aware of a twofold disadvantage. Some have never looked on the Bible as a readable book. They remember how they got long tasks from it at school, and spelled their arduous way through polysyllabic chapters and joyless genealogies. And in later life they have only heard it sounded forth monotonously from the drowsy desk, or freezing in the atmosphere of some sparse and wintry sanctuary. So irksome and insipid has every association made

it, that were they shut up in a parlour with an old directory, and an old almanack, and an old Bible, they would spend the first hour on the almanack, and the next on the directory, and would die of *ennui* before they opened the Bible. They have got at home a set of their favourite classics, and on a quiet evening they will take down a volume of Chaucer or Spenser, or even Thomas Fuller or Jeremy Taylor, or an Elzevir Virgil, or a Grenville Homer, and read at it till long beyond their time of rest ; but to them the Bible is no classic. They do not care to keep it in some taking or tasteful edition, and they would never dream of sitting down to read it as a recreation or an intellectual treat. And then there are others in a happier case to whom that Bible is so sacred—who have found it so full of solemn import, and to whom its every sentence is so fraught with divine significance, that they feel it wrong or revolting to read it with the critic's eye. They would rather peruse it on their bended knees, praying God to show them the wonders in His Word, than, with the scholar's pencil in their hand, ready to seize on each happy phrase and exquisite figure. They would rather peruse it in the company of Luther or Leighton, than along with Erasmus or Grotius. We can understand the feelings of each. But we trust that both will bear with us a little whilst we endeavour to show that if no book be

so important as the Bible, so none is more interesting, and that the book which contains most of the beautiful is the one which must ever remain the standard of the good and the true.

And here we would only add one remark which it is important to bear in memory. The rhetorical and poetical beauties of Scripture are merely incidental. Its authors wrote, not for glory or display—not to astonish or amuse their brethren, but to instruct them and make them better. They wrote for God's glory, not their own ; they wrote for the world's advantage, not to aggrandise themselves. Demosthenes composed his most splendid oration in order to win the crown of eloquence ; and the most elaborate effort of ancient oratory—the “Panegyric” to which Isocrates devoted fifteen years—was just an essay written for a prize. How different the circumstances in which the speech on Mars Hill was spoken ; and the farewell sermon in the upper chamber at Troas ! Herodotus and Thucydides composed their histories with a view to popular applause ; and Pindar's fiery pulse beat faster in prospect of the great Olympic gathering and the praises of assembled Greece. How opposite the circumstances in which the Seer of Horeb penned his faithful story, and Isaiah and Jeremiah poured forth their fearless denunciations of popular sins !

The most superb of modern historians confesses the flutter which he felt when the last line of his task was written, and he thought that perhaps his fame was established. A more important history concludes: "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name." And some of you will remember the proud *finale* in which the Roman lyrist predicts for himself immortal celebrity.* Alongside of his eloquent but egotistic vaticination, you cannot do better than read the last words of Israel's sweet singer,—“HIS name shall endure for ever; HIS name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.”

Remembering then that the Bible contains no ornamental passages, nothing written for mere display, that its steadfast purpose is, “Glory to God in the highest,” and the truest

* “Exegi monimentum ære perennius.

. . . . Usque ego postera

Crescam laude recens,” &c.

—HOR. lib. iii. Od. 30.

blessedness of man,—we repeat that that Bible abounds in passages of the purest beauty and stateliest grandeur, all the grander and all the more beautiful because they are casual and unsought. The fire which flashes from the iron hoof of the Tartar steed as he scours the midnight path is grander than the artificial firework ; for it is the casual effect of speed and power. The clang of ocean as he booms his billows on the rock, and the echoing caves give chorus, is more soul-filling and sublime than all the music of the orchestra ; for it is the music of that main so mighty that there is a grandeur in all it does,—in its sleep a melody, and in its march a stately psalm. And in the bow which paints the melting cloud there is a beauty which the stained glass or gorgeous drapery emulates in vain ; for it is the glory which gilds beneficence, the brightness which bespeaks a double boon, the flush which cannot but come forth when both the sun and shower are there. The style of Scripture has all this glory. It has the gracefulness of a high utility ; it has the majesty of intrinsic power ; it has the charm of its own sanctity ; it never labours, never strives, but, instinct with great realities and bent on blessed ends, it has all the translucent beauty and unstudied power which you might expect from its lofty object and all-wise Author.

There is no phenomenon in nature so awful

as a thunder-storm ; and almost every poet from Homer and Virgil down to Dante and Milton, or rather down to Grahame or Pollok, has described it. In the Bible, too, we have a thunder-storm, the 29th Psalm—the description of a tempest, which, rising from the Mediterranean, and travelling by Lebanon, and along the inland mountains, reaches Jerusalem, and sends the people into the temple-porticoes for refuge. And, besides those touches of terror in which the geographical progress of the tornado is described, it derives a sacred vitality and power from the presence of Jehovah in each successive peal. “The voice of the Lord is on the sea : the God of glory thundereth : the Lord is on the mighty sea. The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars ; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He maketh them also to skip like a calf ; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness ; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests : and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. The Lord sitteth upon the water torrent : yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. The Lord will give strength unto his people :” (and now the sun shines out

again ;) “the Lord will bless his people with peace.” *

Amongst those who have expressly written on the Sublime, it is agreed that the most thrilling spectacle is one whose obscure outline or vague presence at once suggests the supernatural. Of this sublime in terror, the fourth of Job supplies an acknowledged instance:—

“A thing, too, was imparted to me secretly,
Mine ear received a whisper with it.
In tumults of night-visions,
When deep sleep falls on men,
Panic came on me, and horror,
And the multitude of my bones did shake.
A spirit passed before my face,
The hair of my flesh stood up:
It stood—but I could not discern its form:
A figure before mine eyes:
—Silence—and I heard a voice,
‘Shall a mortal be righteous before God?
Shall a man be pure before his Maker?’ ”

But perhaps the poetic beauty in which the Bible most excels all other books is description of the world around us. A better idea of the poetic susceptibility was never given, than when John Foster called it *physiopathy*, “the faculty of

* Over many of the psalms it sheds a flood of new significance when the reader understands their mechanism, as in the case of many it has been disclosed by the labours of Lowth, Horsley, Hengstenberg, and others. It was one morning in his house at Dundee, that a friend dear and ever memorable, Robert M'Cheyne, showed us the geographical structure of this 29th Psalm. And certainly it enhances the meaning of this

pervading all Nature with one's own being, so as to have a perception, a life, an agency, in all things." "If you observe a man of this order, though his body be a small thing, completely invested with a little cloth, he expands his being in a grand circle all around him. He feels as if he grew in the grass and flowers and groves ; as if he stood on yonder distant mountaintop, conversing with clouds, or sublimely sporting among their imaged precipices, caverns, and ruins. He flows in that river, chafes in its cascades, smiles in the water-lilies, frisks in the fishes. He is sympathetic with every bird, and seems to feel the sentiment that prompts the song of each ; and from this ability to transfuse himself into every object around him, in a certain sense he inherits all things." To which we would only add, that besides this poetic sympathy with Nature the sacred writers seem to have possessed a still purer perception of what Nature is. They not only could transfuse their own life into the landscape, but they could discern how much of the living God is there. And instead of that material semblance which a Claude

majestic ode when we conceive the spectator-psalmist as standing with the awe-struck multitude in the temple-porch, watching the march of the thunder-storm as it advances from the Mediterranean or "mighty" sea, and imagining its progress from Lebanon, adown the range of Hermon, and the course of the Jordan, till it darkens over the wilderness and reaches Jerusalem and bursts in a water-flood around themselves.

or a Rembrandt might project on his canvas, or Virgil or Shenstone might embody in his verse, they inhaled Jehovah's breath and hearkened to Jehovah's voice, and received into their adoring bosoms as much of Jehovah's life as lingers in our defaced and fallen world. Hence it comes to pass, that the Book which contains by far the brightest and most vivacious landscape—the holiest and happiest view of the things around us, is the Word of God. Seen in His own light, and delineated by His own pencil, the mountains “skip,” the seas “clap hands,” the little hills “rejoice,” and the valleys “sing.” The Bible landscape has a limpid freshness, as viewed by an eye which carnality has never dimmed, or rather that loving and observant eye which grace has made young again. It needs no Dryads to people its woodlands, no Oreads to flit over its mountains, no Naiads to give mirth to its waters or music to its streams; for a higher animation fills them, and every chiming brook and fluttering spray, every zephyr and every blessed sound, is a note in God's own anthem,—“Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps: fire and hail: snow and vapours: stormy wind fulfilling his word: mountains and all hills: fruitful trees and all cedars: beasts and all cattle: creeping things and flying fowl: kings of the earth and all people: princes and all judges of the earth: both young men and maidens:

old men and children : let them praise the name of the Lord ; for his name alone is excellent ; his glory is above the earth and heaven.”

But instead of collecting illustrative passages from what may be called the pastoral and descriptive poetry of Scripture, we shall quote one which, whilst a graphic description, like most kindred portions of Holy Writ, owes its sublimity to its moral power ; and we quote it the rather, because our own translation does not bring out its entire significance. It is the twenty-eighth chapter of Job, and the question is, Where is Wisdom to be found ? and, What is the abode or hiding-place of Understanding ? Is it a deposit hidden in the bowels of the earth ?—a treasure for which we must ransack the caverns underneath, or rummage in the rifted rock ? Is it a secret for which we must bribe the grave ? or which death alone can whisper in the ear ? And so it commences with a magnificent account of the miner’s doings underground :—

“Truly there is a mine for the silver,
And a place for the gold so fine :
Iron is dug up from the earth,
And the earth pours forth its copper.
Man digs into darkness,
And explores to the utmost bound
The stones of dimness and death shade ;
He breaks up the veins from the matrix,
Which, unthought of, and underfoot,
Are drawn forth to gleam among mankind.
The surface pours forth bread,

But the subterranean winds a fiery region.
Its stones are the sapphires' bed,
And it hides the dust of gold.
It is a path which the eagle knows not,
Nor has the eye of the vulture scanned it.
The lion's whelp has not tracked it,
Nor the ravening lion pounced on it.
The miner thrusts his hand on the sparry ore,
And overturns the mountains by their roots.
He cuts a channel through the rock,
And espies each precious gem.
He binds up the oozing waters,
And darts a radiance through the gloom,
But, oh, where shall WISDOM be found?
And where is the place of UNDERSTANDING?
Man knows not its source,
For it is not to be found in the land of the living.
The sea says, 'It is not in me;'
And 'Not in me,' echoes the abyss.
Solid go'd cannot be given for it,
Nor silver be weighed for its purchase.
It cannot be bought for the ingot of Ophir,
For the precious onyx or the sapphire.
The burnished gold and crystal cannot equal it,
Nor golden trinkets match it.
Talk not of corals or pearls,
For the attraction of wisdom is beyond rubies.
The topaz of Ethiopia cannot rival it,
Nor the purest bullion barter it.

Whence, then, cometh Wisdom?
And where is the place of Understanding?
Hid from the eyes of all living,
And unseen by the fowls of the air,
Destruction and death say,
'We have heard its fame with our ears.'
God understands its track;
He knows its dwelling-place;
For to the ends of the earth He sees
And under all heaven surveys.

When He weighed out the air
 And meted out the water ;
 When He fixed the course of the rain
 And the path of the hurricane ;
 Then did He eye it and proclaim it :
 He prepared it and searched it out,
 And unto man He said,
 ' Behold ! the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom,
 And to depart from evil is Understanding.' " *

It would consume all our space were we transcribing from the Prophets and the Psalms those passages of grandeur which make the sacred text so awful and august ; and of that class we shall give no more. But perhaps the sublime, though the highest order of literary effort, is not, after all, the most popular. Were it put to the world at large, we should, probably, find that the books most men like best are those which are less exalted above the every-day level, and whose simple incidents, and cheerful glimpses, and human pathos, bring them home to every one's comprehension and feeling. In this sort of narrative that world's book, the Bible, abounds. Do you ask for tenderness ? " And Ruth said to her mother-in-law, Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee ; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge ; thy people shall be my

* Some lines of the above may be slightly paraphrased ; but the version is essentially the same as that of Dr Mason Good, with modifications from Dr Lee and others.

people, and thy God my God : where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Do you ask for pathos ? "And Cushie said, Tidings, my lord the king ; for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. And the king said unto Cushie, Is the young man, Absalom, safe ? And Cushie answered, The enemies of my lord, the king, and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is. And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept ; and as he wept thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom ! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son." Or do you ask for natural, simple, and affecting narrative ? "A certain man had two sons ; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land ; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country ; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat ; and no

man gave unto him. And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's house have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son ; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet ; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat and be merry ; for this my son was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

We could very willingly have extended these remarks to other species of composition, and would have liked to show particularly how many models of eloquent argument and engaging discourse are contained in the New Testament. But on the wide field of Revelation, with its intellectual opulence, we forbear to enter. We can easily understand how the Bible was one of the four volumes which always lay on Byron's

table ; and it would be easy to fill a volume with the testimonies, witting or unwitting, which painters, sculptors, orators, and poets, have rendered to the most thought-suggesting book in all the universe. It never aims at fine writing. It never steps aside for a moment for the sake of a felicitous expression or a good idea. It has only one end—to tell the world about God and the great salvation ; and yet the wonder is, that it has incidentally done more to supply rhetoric with powerful and happy diction, and literature with noble thoughts and images, and the fine arts with memorable subjects, than perhaps all other books that have been written. The world's Maker is the Bible's Author, and the same profusion which furnished so lavishly the abode of man, has filled so richly and adorned so brilliantly the Book of man.

Just as that Bible is the great storehouse and repertory of intellectual *wealth*, so we must add that its vital truth is the grand source of intellectual *power*. When Sir Samuel Romilly visited Paris immediately after the first French Revolution, he remarked, “ Everything I saw convinced me that, independently of our future happiness and our sublimest enjoyments in this life, religion is necessary to the comforts, the conveniences, and even the elegances and lesser pleasures of life. Not only have I never met with a

writer truly eloquent who did not at least affect to believe in religion, but I never met with one in whom religion was not the richest source of his eloquence." And we are persuaded that in things intellectual the rule will hold, that piety is power. We are persuaded that no productions of genius will survive to the end of all things in which there is not something of God ; and we are farther persuaded, that no book can exercise a lasting ascendancy over mankind on which His blessing has not been implored, and in which His Spirit does not speak. Of all the powers and faculties of the human mind, the noblest is the one which God has created for Himself ; and if that reverential or adoring faculty do not exist, or if it be by suicidal hands extirpated, the world will soon cease to feel any force in the man who has lost his faith in God. The stateliest compartment in this human soul is the one which, in creating it, Jehovah reserved for His own throne-room and presence-chamber ; and however curiously decorated or gorgeously furnished the other compartments be, if this be empty and void, it will soon diffuse a blank and beggarly sensation over all the rest. And thus, whilst the Voltaires and Rousseaus, of Atheist memory, are waxing old and vanishing from the firmament of letters, names of less renown, but more religion, brighten to a greater lustre. So true is it that no man can long keep a hold of

his fellow-men, unless he himself first has hold of God.

But if a sincere and strenuous Theism be thus important—such natural faith in God as upbore the wing of Plato in his long and ethereal flights, or bulged the Saxon thews of Shakspeare in his mightiest efforts, incomparably more prevalent is that intellectual prowess which a scriptural faith produces. He is no Unknown God whom the believer in Jesus worships, and it is no ordinary inspiration which that God of light and love supplies to His servants. It would be easy to enumerate one genius after another which the gospel kindled, if it did not create. That gospel, beyond all controversy, was our own Milton's poetic might. It was the struggling energy which, after years of deep musing and wrapt devotion, after years of mysterious muttering and anxious omen, sent its pyramid of flame into old England's dingy hemisphere, and poured its molten wealth—its lava of gold and gems, fetched deep from classic and patriarchal times, adown the russet steep of Puritan theology. It was the fabled foot which struck from the sward of Cowper's mild and silent life a joyous Castalia—a fountain deep as Milton's fire, and like it tintured with each learned and sacred thing it touched in rising, but soft and full as Siloah's fount, which "flowed fast by the oracle of God." And that gospel was the torch which, on the

hills of Renfrewshire, fired a young spirit,*—himself both sacrifice and altar-pile,—till Britain spied the light, and wondered at the brief but brilliant beacon. But why name the individual instances? What is modern learning, and the march of intellect, and the reading million, but one great monument of the gospel's quickening power? Three or four hundred years ago the classics were revived; at the same time the gospel was restored. Digging in the Pompeii of the middle age, Lorenzo and Leo found the lamps in which the old classic fires had burned; but there was no oil in the lamps, and they had long since gone out. For models of candelabra and burners there could not be better than Livy, and Horace, and Plato, and Pindar; but the faith which once filled them—the old Pagan fervor—was long since extinct, and the lamps were only fit for the shelf of the antiquary. But it was then that, in the crypt of the convent, Luther, and Zuingle, and Melancthon, observed a line of supernatural light, and with lever and mattock lifted the gravestone, and found the gospel which the Papist had buried. There it had flamed, “a light shining in a dark place,” through unsuspected ages—unquenchable in its own immortality—the long-lost lamp in the sepulchre. Jupiter was dead, and Minerva had melted into ether, and Apollo was gray with eld,

* Pollak.

and the most elegant idols of antiquity had gone to the moles and the bats. But there is One who cannot die and does not change—and the Fountain of Scriptural Learning is He who is also the Fountain of Life—the Alpha and the Omega—Jesus the Son of God. From His gospel it was that the old classic lamps, when filled with fresh oil, were kindled again; and at that gospel it was that Bacon, and Locke, and Milton, and Newton, and all the mighty spirits of modern Europe, caught the fire which made them blaze, the meteors of our firmament, the marvels of our favoured time.

Should any one read these lines who is ambitious to be the lasting teacher or the extensive light of society—to paint, or think, or sing, for the students of a future age, let him remember that nothing can immortalise the works of genius if there be no gospel in them. The facts of that gospel are the world's main stock of truth—the fire of that gospel is the only Promethean spark which can ignite our dead truths into quenchless and world-quickening powers.

For practical and devotional purposes, we could desire no better version of the Bible than our own truthful and time-hallowed translation. But for those purposes to which we have now been adverting,—for the sake of its intelligent literary perusal, we have sometimes wished that

either in the originals or in English, some judicious editor would give us, each in a separate fasciculus, the several contributions of each sacred penman. As it is, with the sixty-six volumes of the Bible all compressed into a single tome, we are apt to regard them, not only as alike the Holy Scriptures, which they are, but as contemporary compositions, which they are not. We forget that, in point of time, there is the same interval between Moses and Matthew, as there is betwixt the close of the canon and the compilation of the Augsburg Confession. And, with each portion comminuted into those little paragraphs called *verses*, we are apt to lose sight of the characteristic style of the various compositions. An epistle looks like a poem, and a history reads like a collection of adages and apophthegms. But allowing one book to contain the Minor Prophets, and another the General Epistles, there would still remain upwards of twenty inspired penmen whose writings might, much to their mutual illustration, be bound up in separate volumes, and preserved in their individual identity. We should thus have in one volume all that Moses wrote, and in another, chronologically arranged, all the writings of Paul. One volume might contain all the psalms of David: another, those psalms (nearly as numerous) which were indited by Moses, and Asaph, and others. In one cover might be

bound up the Gospel, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse of John; and in another, that divine Song, those Confessions of a converted philosopher, and that ancient "Wealth of Nations," which are the inspired bequest of the Imperial Solomon. And under such an arrangement might we not hope that books, usually read in chapters or smaller morsels, might sometimes be read continuously,—taken down from the shelf, as any attractive book would be taken, on a leisure evening, and read through at a single sitting? Might we not hope, in such a case, that whilst those who now read the Old and New Testaments would read them still, some who at present do not read the Bible might be tempted to read Paul, Moses, and Isaiah? And is it too sanguine to expect that, as the searching of the Scriptures and sacred knowledge thus increased, some who first resorted to the book for literary entertainment might learn from it the lessons which make wise to life everlasting? *

At all events, theology has not yet turned to sufficient account the Bible's marvellous diversity. We know how opposite are the turns, and how various the temperaments of different people, and how unequal their capacities. One has

* The idea thus thrown out has since been realised. Each book of the Bible can now be obtained separately in the issues of the British and Foreign Bible Society, or in those of Messrs Bagster.

a logician's intellect, and delights in a dialectic subtilty. Another has a prompt intuition, and deprecates as so much bamboozlement every ingenious or protracted argument. Some have the ideal faculty so strong, that they never understand a proposition rightly till it sparkles as a sentiment ; poet-wise, their eyes are in the apex ; they cannot descry matters of fact and homely truths, which creep along the ground or travel on all-fours ; but in order to arrest a vision so sublime as theirs, thoughts must spread the wings of metaphor, and soar into the zenith ; whilst others are so prosaic, that they are offended at all imagery, and grudge the time it takes to translate a trope or figure. Some minds are concrete, and cannot understand a general statement till they see a particular example. Others are so abstract, that an illustration is an interruption, and an example a waste of time. Most men love history, and nearly all men live much in the future. Some minds are pensive, some are cheerful ; some are ardent, some are singularly phlegmatic. And had an angel penned the Bible, even though he could have condescended to the capacity of the lowliest reader, he could not have foreseen the turn and fitted the taste of every child of Adam. And had a mortal penman been employed, however versatile his talent, however many-faced his mind, he could not have made himself all things

to his brethren, nor produced styles enow to mirror the mental features of all mankind. In His wisdom and goodness the Most High has judged far better for our world ; and using the agency of forty authors—transfusing through the peculiar tastes and temperaments of so many individuals (and these “men of like passions with ourselves,”) the self-same truths, the Spirit of God has secured for the Bible universal adaptation. For the pensive, there is the dirge of Jeremiah and the cloud-shadowed drama of Job. For the sanguine and hopeful, there sounds the blithe voice and there beats the warm pulse of old Galilean Peter. And for the calm, and contemplative, the peacefully-loving, there spreads like a molten melody, or an abysmal joy, the page—sunny, ecstatic, boundless—of John the Divine. The most homely may find the matter of fact, the unvarnished wisdom and plain sense, which is the chosen aliment of their sturdy understandings, in James’s blunt reasonings ; and the most heroic can ask no higher standard, no loftier feats, no consecration more intense, no spirituality more ethereal, than they will find in the Pauline Epistles. Those who love the sparkling aphorism and the sagacious paradox are provided with food convenient in the Proverbs ; and for those whose poetic fancy craves a banquet more sublime, there are the dew of Hermon and Bozrah’s red wine,—the tender

freshness of pastoral hymns, and the purple tumult of triumphal psalms. And whilst the historian is borne back to ages so remote that gray tradition cannot recollect them, and athwart oblivious centuries, in nooks of brightness and in oases of light sees the patriarch groups, clear, vivid, and familiar as the household scenes of yesterday,—there is also a picture sketched for the explorers of the future. For whilst the Apocalyptic curtain slowly rises,—whilst the seven thunders shake its darkness palpable, and streaks of glory issue through its fringe of fire, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven; and gazing on the pearly gates, and peaceful streets, and bowers of sanctity, our planet can scarce believe that she is gazing on herself,—that this is old Mother Earth grown young again,—that this vision of holiness and bliss is nothing more than Paradise restored—that “new” but ancient “earth in which dwelleth righteousness.”

But in order rightly to appreciate this literary diversity of the Bible’s several books, it is essential to remember the plenary inspiration of the Bible collective. Imagine the case of an accomplished evangelist. Suppose there were a missionary endowed with the gift of tongues, and called to ply his labours in different places at successive periods. He goes to France, and, addressing its vivacious inhabitants, he abandons the direct and sober style of his fatherland;

every utterance is antithesis; every gem of thought is cut brilliant-wise; and the whole oration jigs on gay, elastic springs. He passes thence to Holland, and in order to conciliate its grave burghers his steady thoughts move on in sober procession, trim, concinnate, old-fashioned, orderly. Anon he finds himself amidst a tribe of Red Indians; and instantly his imagination spreads pinions of flame, and, familiar with thunder-water and burning mountains, his talk is to the tune of the tempest. And ending his progress in Arabia or Persia, through the fantastic sermon skip shadowy antelopes or dream-like gazelles; whilst each interstice of thought is filled by a voluptuous mystery, like the voice of the darkling nightingale as it floats through air laden with jasmine or roses. And thus, "all things to all men," this gifted evangelist wins them all; whereas, had he spoken like an Oriental to the Red Indian, or like a Persian to the Hollander, he would have offended each, and would have been a barbarian to all. The Teacher is one—the same Evangelist everywhere. The truth, the theme is one—over and over again the same glorious gospel. Nay, the substance of each sermon is essentially one; for it is a new forth-pouring from the same fountain—another yearning from the same full heart. But to suit successive hearers the rhythm alters, the tune is changed.

Such is the principle on which the Great Evangelist has acted. When inditing sermons for the world, such is the principle on which the Divine Spirit has proceeded. Speaking to men, He has used the words of men. When on the two tables God wrote the Ten Commandments, He did not write them in the speech unutterable of the third heavens—He wrote them in Hebrew letters, Hebrew words, and Hebrew idiom ; and had it so pleased Him, He might have given all the Sriptures in the self-same way. Employing no mortal pen whatever, from the top of Sinai he might have handed down the one Testament, and from the top of Olivet the other—the whole, from Genesis to Revelation, completed without human intervention, and on amaranthine leaves engraven in Heaven's own holograph. And in such a case there would have been no dispute as to the extent of inspiration ; there would have been no need that, like the electrometers of the meteorologist, theologians should invent tests of its intensity, nicely graduated from the zero of Superintendence up to the fulness of Suggestion. But Infinite Wisdom preferred another way. Inspiration He made the counterpart of the Incarnation ; and as in the Incarnate Mystery we have, without mutual encroachment and without confusion, very God and very man, so in theopneustic Scripture we have a book, every sentence of which is truly human, and yet the whole of

which is truly divine. Holy *men* spake it, but holy men spake and wrote it as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And just as when God sent His Son into the world, He sent Him not in the fashion of an angel, nor even in the fashion of a glorified and celestial man, but in all points like His brethren ; so when He sent into the world His written word, it came not ready written with an angel's plume, but with reeds from the Jordan it was consigned to paper from the Nile, every word of it Hellenistic or Hebrew, and yet every word none the less heavenly. And though the unlettered disciple, who in the identity of the ultimate Author forgets the diversity of the intermediate scribes—though he loses less than the dry critic, who only recognises the mortal penman—that student alone will get the full good of His Bible who recognises the parallel facts—its perfect and all-pervasive divinity, its perfect and all-investing humanity. Or, to sum it up in the vivid words of Gaussen : “ As a skilful musician, called to execute alone some masterpiece, puts his lips by turns to the mournful flute, the shepherd's reed, the mirthful pipe, and the war-trumpet, so the Almighty God, to sound in our ears His eternal word, has selected from of old the instruments best suited to receive successively the breath of His Spirit. Thus we have in God's great anthem of revelation the sublime simplicity of John ; the argumentative,

elliptical, soul-stirring energy of Paul ; the fervour and solemnity of Peter ; the poetic grandeur of Isaiah ; the lyric moods of David ; the ingenuous and majestic narratives of Moses ; the sententious and royal wisdom of Solomon. Yes, it was all this—it was Peter, Isaiah, Matthew, John, or Moses ; but it was God.” “And such ought to be the word of Jehovah—like Emmanuel, full of grace and truth—at once in the bosom of God and in the heart of man—powerful and sympathising—celestial and human—exalted, yet humble—imposing and familiar—God and man.”

But here a compunctious thought comes over us. In the previous survey it seems as if we had gone, so many of us, to view a famous palace, and we have stood on the lawn in front, or looked up from the quadrangle, and told its towers and marked its bulwarks, and sketched some of its ornaments ; but however commanding the elevation, however graceful the details, and however interesting the various styles, after all the glory is within. No doubt, there is a loveliness even in the letter of Scripture ; but there is life for our souls in its divine significance. Reader, do not rest till you are introduced to the interior. That Book which God has made the monument of the great redemption, and where He has put His own perpetual Shekinah, do you choose it as the gymnasium where you may “nourish a

youth" truly "sublime;" the castle where, in a world of impiety and an age of peril, you may find entrenchment for your faith and protection for your principles; the sanctuary at whose oracle you may find answers to your doubts and light upon your path; the spirit's home, whither your affections shall every day return, and where your character shall progressively ennoble into a conformity with such a royal residence?

Allow us, therefore, as a supplement to these remarks, to entreat you to peruse the Bible itself. With prayer, with expectation, with eyes alert and open, read it; in your most tranquil retirement read it; and when a few of you, who are friends like-minded, come together, read it; search it, sift it, talk about it, talk with it. And as he thus grows mighty in it, we promise each earnest Bible-student two rewards—it will make him both a wiser and holier man.

Wiser: for the sayings of God's Word are solid. There is a substance, which you must have noticed, cast on the sea-shore, the medusa, or sea-nettle, as some sorts of it are called; an object rather beautiful as its dome of amber quivers in the sun. And a goodly size it often is,—so large at times that you could scarcely lift it: but it is all a watery pulp, and if you were carrying it home or trying to preserve it, the whole mass would quickly trickle out of sight and leave you nothing but a few threads of sub-

stance. Now, most books are like the marine medusa ; fresh stranded, newly published, (as the expression is,) they make a goodly show ; but when a few suns have shone on them, the crystal jelly melts, the glittering cupola has vanished, and a few meagre fibres in your memory are all the residue of the once popular authorship. If you ever tried it, you must have been struck with the few solid thoughts, the few suggestive ideas, which survive from the perusal of the most brilliant of human books. Few of them can stand three readings ; and of the memorabilia which you had marked in your first perusal, on reverting to them you find that many of them are not so striking, or weighty, or original as at first you fancied. But the Word of God is solid ; it will stand a thousand readings ; and the man who has gone over it the most frequently and the most carefully, is the surest of finding new wonders there. And just as the pearls of Scripture retain their intrinsic worth ; as notwithstanding the frowsy head-gear they have garnished, the dull discourses they have adorned, they beam brighter than ever when the hand of a Vinet, or Chalmers, or Hall has arranged them anew into a coronet of sanctified taste and genius : so he among sages is the wealthiest man who has detected, and appropriated, and thoroughly possessed himself of the largest number of Bible sayings,—the merchantman who, seek-

ing goodly pearls, has searched for them on this exhaustless strand.

And holier : for though we have hitherto spoken of the Bible very much as if it were a human book, you cannot be long versant with it till you find that it is something more. Like Tabor, it is a "mountain apart." Among the books of this world it is isolated, unique, peculiar ; and the farther up you get, the more acquainted you become with human books, and the more alongside of them you study the Book of God, the more amazed you will be at its outstanding elevation, its world-commanding pre-eminence. And just as in scaling a high mountain it needs no chemistry to analyse the air and inform the pilgrim that it is free from impurities ; as every breath which paints a purer crimson on his cheek, and sends a tonic tide through all his suppling frame, would tell him its salubrity : so it needs no argument, no analysis, to persuade a spiritual mind that the air of heaven, the breath of God, is here. In his holier feelings as he reads, in the godly zeal and joyful strenuousness which requite each mounting footstep, with instinct sure his regenerate nature hails the congenial inspiration. And just as on Tabor's summit, when from heaven saints in snowy garments came down, and from Christ His own glory came through, it needed no refracting prism or condensing lens to assure

them that it was a body of more than earthly brightness which they were gazing upon : so, dear reader, when a text is transfigured, when the Holy Spirit in the Word lets out its grace and glory, it will need no Paley nor Butler to prove that the Wisdom and the Power of God are there, but, radiant with emitted splendour, and dazzling your admiring eyes, in God's own light you will see it to be God's own Word. Nor can we wish for you a better wish than that thus you may be often surprised and overwhelmed. Yes, though your lot should be cast in the very midst of a noisy capital, and in the meridian of this man-wasting, money-making age, may you often find your Sabbath, and your place of prayer, and your Bible, "a mountain apart." In blissful bewilderment may you forget the fascinations of earth and the pleasures of sin, and only wake up to find yourself alone with the Master. And none shall less grieve than he whom you have kindly accompanied thus far, if the literary attractions of the Book be in this manner merged and superseded in charms more spiritual—in attractions which, if they draw you to the Bible, will also draw you to the Saviour, and at last to heaven.



CHAPTER IX.

THE ILLUMINATED BIBLE AND THE LIVING EPISTLE.

BEFORE the days of printing, the copyists sometimes took great pains with their manuscripts, and Bibles were then elaborately embellished. Traced in silver and gold and brilliant colours, occasionally executed on tinted parchment, the mere letters were often a gorgeous picture ; and such illuminated manuscripts will always awaken the astonishment and delight of the tasteful antiquarian.

We do not print our Bibles in silver and gold ; nor have we verses marked out from the others by their vermilion ink or bolder character. And yet, we have sometimes thought that every careful reader can illuminate his own copy as he proceeds. The book is all bright with passages which at one time or another have stirred or strengthened him ; it is all

radiant with texts which have aroused, or rebuked, or consoled him. On this verse he heard a sermon which he never can forget. This chapter is associated with some affecting event in his domestic history : and here is a paragraph which gave rise to a dialogue or meditation, ever memorable in his religious career.

Yet, were a hundred such illuminated Bibles compared, it would be found that in no two of them is the same set of passages marked and made prominent. Some may coincide ; and a few emphatic sentences may be common to all : but, according to individual peculiarities or providential circumstances, it will turn out that portions fraught with glory to one eye, are obscure or ordinary to every other.

To take two instances. Suppose that each man were to mark in vermilion the verse that first convinced him of sin, or first made him anxious for the saving of his soul. In the Bible of the Apostle Paul, the tenth command would be inscribed in red letters ; for, as he tells us, " I had not known sin, except the commandment had said, Thou shalt not covet." In the Bible of Alexander Henderson, it would be, " He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber ;" for that was the shaft which pierced the conscience of the unconverted minister. In the Bible of the Ironside soldier, the

rubric would be found at Ecclesiastes xi. 9 ; for it was there that the bullet stopped, which but for the interposing Bible, would have pierced his bosom ; and when the battle was over, he read, " Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Or, suppose that each were to mark in golden letters the text which has been to him the gate of heaven ; the text through whose open lattice a reconciled God has looked forth on him, or through whose telescope he first has glimpsed the Cross. The Ethiopian chamberlain would mark the fifty-third of Isaiah : for it was when reading about the Lamb led to the slaughter, that his eye was directed to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, and he went on his way rejoicing. The English martyr, Bilney, would indicate the faithful saying, " Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief ;" for it was in sight of these words that the burden fell from his back which fasts and penances had only rendered more weighty. There was " a stricken deer " who had long been panting for the water-brooks, but he had yet found no comfort ; when, one day, listlessly taking up a Testament, it opened

at the words, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past," and instantly he realised the sufficiency of the atonement, and embraced the gospel: and, doubtless, the Bard of Olney would signalise by the most brilliant memorial the spot where the Sun of Righteousness first shone into his soul.—"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." These were the words which instantly converted into a living temple the calm and stately mind of Jonathan Edwards; and we may be sure that,—like Jacob, who, at Luz, would always see lingering the light of the ladder,—every time he returned to the passage, even in his most cursory perusal, the devout theologian would perceive a surviving trace of that manifestation, which into his vacant, wistful soul brought "the only wise God," and in glorifying that God gave him an object worthy of the vastest powers and the longest existence.

Such is the divine variety of Scripture; and thus from the stores of religious biography might be compiled a sort of historical commentary, showing what service in the way of "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness," the different passages have done. It would be found that in this quiver

there are hundreds of arrows which have pierced the conscience and convinced of sin. It would be found that from this tree of life many leaves have dropped, and proved effectual to the healing of such wounds. It would be found that in this garden there hardly grows an herb, but some visitor has been regaled by its beauty or revived by its fragrance; and those which have not been sweet to the taste, have, in their very bitterness, yielded a salutary tonic. How many a text should we find invested with its true and touching legend! This was the lamp which lighted such a pilgrim through that ominous eclipse; and this was the hidden manna which, in the howling wilderness, restored his soul. Here is the smooth stone with which he struck down that terrible temptation, and here is the good sword with which he cut off its head. Here is the harp on which he discoursed sweet music when God gave him songs in the night; and there is the staff with which he was comforted when he walked through the valley.

An illuminated Bible makes an illustrative reader; and if, in your private perusal, you come ever and anon on passages made dear and memorable by their bearing on your personal history, in your own turn you will, in some measure, supply that commentary which, of all others, is the greatest desideratum,—a legible

Christian,—an epistle of Christ that may be known and read of all men.

Perhaps our reader is a young man. Perhaps he is a young man of enthusiasm and energy. In exuberant health, and with spirits briskly bounding, he has the prospect not only of living long, but living largely—a man who will feel in every fibre all the influences of the coming age, and who will be himself no mean influence in it.

Brother, look before you. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” In this abundance of life, and this measure of ability, God has given you a solemn trust. You cannot help telling on others for good or evil. And when a few years are past, you will have done a great deal to deepen the perdition, or to heighten the bliss, of yourself and others.

Methinks we hear you say, “I don’t want to be vicious; nay, I would rather be uncommonly virtuous. I would like to be a better man than most of your so-called Saints. I am sick of their affectations and hypocrisies. I cannot bear their cant. I want to be in every action sincere and earnest,—every atom true. I cannot fill up a ready-made formula: I cannot stow myself away in the stiff exuvixæ of a misshapen antiquity. I must be original, independent, real. I shall make my own model, and then I shall make myself.”

By all means be genuine; nay, by all means

be original. But, on the part of a creature, what is the truest originality? Is it not the closest copying of perfection? that is, the most implicit imitation of the Creator's originals? When Phidias or Praxiteles took a block of marble, did he say to himself, "Now, I shall make a new thing under the sun:—I shall make a figure which can suggest to the beholder nothing that moveth upon the face of the earth or in the waters under the earth:—something so novel, that it has never entered into the heart of man to conceive it, and nobody will guess where the model was found?" Had he said this, he would have produced an original of that sorry sort which we call an oddity,—something very grotesque and ungainly,—something like an African fetich or a Hindoo pagod. But the great artist said, "I shall make, as near as possible, a perfect man. Gathering up hints of strength and symmetry wherever I can find them, I shall devoutly endeavour to realise that exquisite model which was in the eye of the Divine Artist himself:" and, with the humility of genius, content to copy,—limb by limb, and lineament by lineament, there came out from the dead rock the most unique of all originalities,—a perfect figure, a glorified humanity,—a vision of power and joy which makes us understand how very good, once on a time, was this material frame,—how fearfully and wonderfully made at first,—how wonder-

ful and fearful the Resurrection may see it all again.

The Belvidere Apollo is the most unique and original of sculptures, because it is the most earnest and successful of imitations. As far as he could catch sight of it, the artist kept constantly in view the model supplied by the Creator ; and it is by combining so skilfully every fragment of peculiar beauty or vigour which came in his way, and by copying these so faithfully, that he has realised such a splendid conception.

Now, making one proviso—remarking that all genuine goodness is spontaneous—that it is excellence followed for its own sake, not mimicked for admiration's sake—you will find that *that goodness will turn out the most original, not which makes its own model, or strikes out its own style, but which most closely copies Perfection.* This book supplies such a model. It exhibits a Pattern-Man,—a wearer of our intellect and will and affections, who never spoke a word that was not the right one, and who never did a right deed, so that even He Himself could have done it better. This peerless Pattern,—this Man so elevated, yet so tender, —so loyal to God, yet so loving to those around Him,—so separate from sin, yet so void of sanctimoniousness,—the Word sets before you, and God says, Be ye followers of Christ. Walk as Christ also

walked. Let the mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. And a few sublime spirits, made generous by the Spirit of God, have been seized with a blessed ambition, and not because men would admire them, but because they were smitten by goodness so charming, they have gazed on it, and pondered it, and imbibed it, till they were sensibly changed into the same image, and men felt, "There you go, so noble, so lovely. We know where you have been : you could not have attained an excellence so charming, had not Jesus Christ once been in the world, and had you not somehow been brought in contract with Him."

The most polished Englishman of the last century was Philip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth Earl of Chesterfield. High-born and well-bred, clever, eloquent, and witty, and endowed with a large amount of natural amenity, he was bent on distinction. To dazzle his contemporaries was the business of his life. He was a man who made his own model. From the speeches of Cicero, from the epigrams of Martial, from the saloons of Paris and Versailles, he gleaned the several ingredients of classic grace and modern refinement, and sought to combine them in the courtier, the statesman, and orator. He had no God. In the shrine where the Most High should be, there was a dim outline which looked very like a colossal Stanhope carrying a young Ches-

terfield in its arms ; but, unless this mixture of self-idolatry and son-worship deserve the name, there was no religion in the man. He had his reward. At a levee, or in a drawing-room, he moved "the admired of all admirers." Few made such formidable speeches in Parliament. None uttered so many brilliant sayings in society. He got ribbons, plaudits, diplomatic appointments, the smiles of the fair, the envy of his peers ; everything except true human affection ; everything except the approbation of God and good men. Should any one wish to repeat the man, the mould is still extant. It will be found in Lord Chesterfield's "Letters to his Son ;"—a book of which our great moralist said, in effect, that "it inculcates the morals of a profligate with the manners of a dancing-master." But before taking more trouble, it is well to know the result. At the close, he confessed that his life had been as joyless as it had been selfish and hollow : "I have recently read Solomon with a kind of sympathetic feeling. I have been as wicked and as vain, though not as wise as he : but now I am old enough to feel the truth of his reflection, 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit.'" Repartees sparkled on his dying lips, but all was dreary within, all was darkness ahead. The fame for which he lived, expired before himself ; and now truth declines to write his epitaph, and virtue has no garlands for his grave.

Still a boy, while this old worldling lay dying, William Wilberforce soon grew up, and the grace of God made him a Christian. That is, it taught him to live not to himself, but to the glory of God. It taught him to worship. It showed him that he was not his own proprietor; that he had no right to make his own enjoyment his chief pursuit; and that he must put all his faculties at God's disposal. In the Bible he found the model on which God would have him form his character. He studied it. He prayed over it. He watched himself, and struggled with his evil tendencies. God's Spirit strengthened him, and gave him wonderful self-conquest. Retaining all his natural elasticity, his wit, his bright fancy, his melodious voice and fluent speech,—his random hilarity was exchanged for conscientious kindness, and all his gifts of mind and station were devoutly laid at the feet of his Redeemer. With his pen he expounded to the highest classes that system of vital piety which Whitefield and Wesley had already preached to the populace; and carrying it to the dinner-tables of Clapham, and the evening assemblies of Piccadilly, many who fancied religion too severe in the sermons of Bishop Porteus or the strictures of Hannah More, confessed to its loveliness in the life of Mr Wilberforce. Then, in his public career,—keeping himself on purpose “pure,”—avoiding office, never using for personal ends the

vast ascendancy over others which his fascinating goodness gave him, any more than the *prestige* of his mighty Yorkshire constituency ; alike on the floor of St Stephen's and on the platform of Freemasons' Tavern, he consecrated to every humane and Christian cause "a persuasive and pathetic eloquence, chastened by a pure taste, varied by extensive information, enriched by classical allusion, sometimes elevated by the more sublime topics of Holy Writ—the thoughts and the spirit

'That touched Isaiah's hallowed lips with fire.'"*

How much the individual advocacy of one so loved and honoured effected for Missionary and Bible Societies, it would be difficult to tell ; but it is hardly metaphor to say that Africa wept when he died. His country will never forget him : for although poets, warriors, and statesmen in numbers repose under the roof of the Abbey, England recognises no originality more illustrious, no heroism more patriotic, than his who led the campaign of humanity so long, and who achieved the abolition of the Slave Trade.

The model on which Wilberforce was formed still exists. The reader will find it in the book which we have sought to recommend ; and if, in exploring that book, he finds thoughts to which no one yet has done justice, philanthropic sugges-

* Lord Brougham.

tions which no one has yet carried out, features of excellence which no one yet has exhibited, he will just repeat the experience of a thousand predecessors, and still will leave a virgin-field for the researches of all who follow.

The Book of Nature is not exhausted. Gutta serena and chloroform, coal-gas and steam-carriages, sun-pictures and electric telegraphs, have all come to light within the last few years ; and greater things than these are coming. All that is wanting is an explorer who distinctly understands what it is that he desires, and who will accept the answer when Nature flings it at his feet.

The Book of Revelation is not exhausted either. In our own day it has yielded treasures long latent ; and we have seen such things come out of it as, "The Astronomical Discourses," and "Elijah the Tishbite." Within the memory of some now living, it has yielded Sabbath Schools and Foreign Missions, Prison-visiting, Ragged Schools, and Convict-reformation. It has emancipated our slaves. It has ransomed from ignorance and bondage our factory children. It has sent Scripture-readers and Evangelists into all our towns. It has given our higher classes kinder and fairer feelings towards their less favoured brethren. And scantily as it is even yet admitted into the faith and affections of Christendom, it is the benevolence of the Bible which at

this moment keeps its spirit from souring, and it is the "blessed hope" of the Bible which keeps its heart from breaking: just as the existence of that Bible is a pledge that its merciful Creator has in reserve for the world a long Sabbath of peace and righteousness.

Yet, like the good gifts which Nature retained in her bosom, till the sage discovered them and handed them forth to his fellows, all these great thoughts and good schemes were treasures hid in the Scripture, till Chalmers and Krummacher, Raikes and Sadler, Sarah Martin and Mrs Fry, found them out and brought them forth. But the book is not exhausted; and if you really wish to serve your fellows, this Mentor will show you the way. With its guidance, you will find that the true "excelsior" is humility, and that, like Pascal, Edwards, and Vinet, the believer on his knees sees further than the philosopher on tip-toe. You will find that the book, which, among its affectionate exponents, has yielded characters so distinct, yet so excellent, as Arnold and Buxton, Howard and Williams, Martyn and M'Cheyne, can make you as superior to your present self, as these men were superior to ordinary mortals. In one word, you will find that in things intellectual, he is likely to be the mightiest master who knows the Bible best, and most meekly trusts in God; and in things

moral and philanthropic,—in conduct and character,—he is likely to be the greatest original who is the closest copyist—the most implicit imitator of that Second Adam who is the great theme of the Bible Revelation.





CHAPTER X.

HINTS TO THE BIBLE STUDENT.

NEAR the Franconia Mountains in America there died a very aged man in August 1852. Shrewd, vigorous, and sturdy, he lived without God in the world, fourscore and four years,—a grasping, passionate, and domineering man, a thorough-going worldling. But the sudden death of an old acquaintance startled him. He felt that it was time for himself to get ready, and by an exertion, almost incredible, he learned to read the Testament. “Yes, it was hard work,” as he said to a friend. “At my time of life to begin with the letters and learn to read, was hard work. Sometimes I could not make out the sense. But I would cry to the Almighty to help me, and then I would try again, and He would help me to find it out. So that, now, I have read the Testament through eight times, and here I am in the Epistles of Peter, the ninth

time ; and oh !” he added, with streaming eyes, “it is glory and praise in my heart.” He was a sagacious and energetic old man, and, as he said himself, “I wanted a religion that should be good and strong, and that would keep by me, and help me when I came to die. So I cried to the Almighty, and He gave me a heart for the blessed Testament. I found out how to read it, and then I read in it that Jesus Christ made the world, and the rivers, and the mountains. And then I began to pray to Him, that He would give me a new heart ; and He gave it to me. And I read, that when He lived on earth, He healed the sick and the blind, and was good to the poor ; and then I knew that He would be kind to me ; and He forgave me, and gave me a new heart.” It was quite true. The change on his harsh and rugged nature was very wonderful ; and as he said to the great American Statesman, who was his brother-in-law, “I have had done for me, Daniel, what neither you nor all the great men in the world could do for me ; I have got a new heart.” And, returning to his home, Mr Webster said, “Wonderful things happen in this world, and one of them is, that John Colby has become a Christian.”*

When the reader is prompted by such a powerful motive, the Bible is sure to be abundantly interesting, and it is hardly needful to

* See a recent tract of the American Tract Society.

give rules for its profitable perusal. But, if we do not mistake, most well-disposed persons wish that they carried to the Book a warmer enthusiasm, and sat down to it with a keener relish. They know its divine authority. They feel how solemn is its claim on their attention. They would not be happy to let days or weeks pass without a portion read. And yet they regret that their Bible-reading is so mechanical; that it is so often a tedium and a task-work; and altogether they feel guilty and uncomfortable at their treatment of the Word of God.

We may assume that it is not for want of intrinsic interest or importance, that the Bible proves dull or distasteful to any reader. And for the sake of those who would like to enjoy it more, we would offer a few plain suggestions.

1. The very copy of the Bible which you use, is a matter of some moment. A man of letters will read our English epic in the smallest size and sorriest type, rather than not read it at all; but if he possess the Bard of Paradise in a worthy garb,—if his edition be a learned luxury,—a delight for the eyes to look upon, he will be ready to return to it, and by casual peeps as well as stated perusals, he will be apt to grow mighty in Milton. So with the Jews, ancient and modern. Their transcripts of the Law are prodigies of penmanship, and apart from all other value, would be worth collecting as caligraphic

wonders. In like manner, as one means of enhancing the value of the Book, would it not be well to get an attractive copy? an edition so fair and bright, that its very beauty would coax you to return, and, instead of straining your eyes over blurred and blotted columns, the clear and expressive type, like the recitation of an articulate speaker, would "give the sense, and cause you to understand the reading?"*

2. But in order to understand the meaning, you must take advantage of every help. There is a Geography of the Bible,—an Archæology of the Bible,—a Natural History of the Bible; and it is ignorance of these which makes many portions so insipid. For example, the Acts of the Apostles read without a map, even if they convey some lessons to the heart, must remain a chaos in the memory. But if, instead of its starting points and stations all merging in one another,—if instead of fancying Corinth and Colosse, both towns of Greece, and Antioch and Athens, adjacent villages,—if the route of the apostle resolve into geographical distinctness, it will not only be intensely interesting to follow him from place to place, and mark the successive stations where the gospel was planted; but it will materially enliven your perusal of the Epistles, when you think of the localities where the Roman, Corinthian, Philippian, and Thessa-

* Nehemiah viii. 8.

lonian converts dwelt—the first fruits of European heathendom ; or when you call up the circumstances connected with the Galatian, Ephesian, and Colossian churches,—half Hebrew, half Hellenist. In like manner, some knowledge of Assyrian and Medo-Persian history is essential to a full command of the Old Testament prophecies ; and not only are Amos and Obadiah new books when read among the forsaken rock-eyries of Petra, but Jonah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, and many portions of the larger prophets are full of enigmas, the solutions of which have only lately been dug from under the earth-mounds of Mesopotamia. Even the knowledge of an Eastern custom is instant light on the corresponding fact or saying. When you see a Syrian flock following the shepherd, and answering to his call, you remember, “My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me ;” and when you see the herdsman bringing home to the village at the close of day, the oxen and asses, with which he was intrusted, and once he is within the gate leaving them to themselves, for he knows that they will find their own way through the streets, and all seek their respective stables,—you understand Isaiah’s words, “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” Were the climate, the seasons, and the husbandry of the Holy Land, carefully

noted by some competent observer, they would throw fresh light on many a Scripture ; and even the little which is known of its Natural History, has dispelled many a difficulty. In the siege of Samaria, we are told that, “an ass’s head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and a cab of dove’s dung for five pieces of silver,”* and many have wondered why this last should be sold at all : but when we know that it is the bulbous root of the Star of Bethlehem† which got this name, and which was often used for food, the wonder ceases. People used to think the coneys of Solomon the same as our rabbits, which are indeed “a feeble folk,” but which do not “make their houses in the rock.” Now that the coney is ascertained to be the Daman or Hyrax,‡—a shy defenceless creature, which lurks among the cliffs of the mountains, and darts into its den at the least approach of danger, the words of Agur acquire their full significance. When Solomon says, “Go to the ant, thou sluggard ; consider her ways, and be wise : which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest ;” there can be little doubt that he ascribes a hoarding forethought to the ant. But as no European species is known to lay up stores, it has been usual to understand the passage as an accommo-

* 2 Kings vi. 2. 5.

† *Ornithogalum umbellatum*.

‡ *Hyrax Syriacus*.

dation to a popular impression. It may be so ; but in Asia there is at least one store-gathering species. "In June 1829," says Colonel Sykes, "in my morning walk, I observed more than a score of little heaps of grass seeds (*Panicum*) in several places, on uncultivated land near the parade ground [at Poonah ;] each heap contained about a handful. On examination, I found they were raised by a species of ant, [*Atta providens*,] hundreds of which were employed in bringing up the seeds to the surface, from a store below : the grain had probably got wet at the setting in of the monsoon, and the ants had taken advantage of the first sunny day, to bring it up to dry. The store must have been laid up from the time of the ripening of the grass seeds in January and February." *

3. This leads us to mention another Bible-help, which we think you will find very valuable. Would it not be good for every one to keep for himself, a little store-house of Bible-illustration ? Every book that elucidates Scripture is useful ; but to each person the most serviceable of all commentaries would be one of his own compiling. Were any one to get an interleaved Bible, or still better, perhaps, a blank-paper book ; and whenever, in reading a theological treatise, or a work of Eastern travel, or in listening to a sermon, he found a dark saying expounded, or a

* Entomological Transactions, vol. i., p. 103.

trite saying happily applied, he treasured it up ; his casket would soon fill with pearls of great price. Even although, as is usually the fate of such experiments,—even although the record were imperfectly kept up, its value would be unspeakable. Every text thus illustrated becomes in its turn an illustration ; not only an enlightened surface, but a luminous source,—a torch to a hundred parallels,—a candle to all the context. And although you never made more than a few dozen entries in such a book, they would shed more meaning over the Bible than days of careless and cursory perusal ; and when you had nearly forgotten all other books and sermons, the biographical incidents, the theological elucidations, the illustrative maxims and memorabilia, which you had thus garnered up, would survive, as interesting and instructive as ever.

4. The Bible, as we have already had occasion to mention, is, in one aspect, a book, and in another aspect, a library. It has both unity and variety. It is all alike the Word of God, and yet it is really made up of six-and-sixty volumes. The bouquet is composed of many flowers, but all of them gathered in the conservatory of Heaven. The bundle contains many spices,—aloes, myrrh, and cassia, as well as mint, and cummin,—proverbs as well as gospels, chronicles as well as psalms,—some of

them more exquisite, and some of them more homely, but all of them from God ; and all of them, in their collectiveness, profitable for doctrine or reproof, for correction or instruction, and combining to furnish for every good work the man of God. And where there is such diversity, there will be corresponding affinities ; and without any disparagement to the rest, every reader will find a prevailing attraction to some given portion. The poet is the inheritor of nature. He enjoys it all, and he despises none of it ; but there is some form or presentation in which he specially delights. Crabbe loved the low sandy flats of the Suffolk coast, and Wordsworth the hills of Cumberland. Davy forgot philosophy and became a little child among granite peaks, which spoke of his native Penzance ; and Scott declared that he should die if he did not once-a-year inhale the heather. Each had his turn, and for every taste the Creator had provided a counterpart. And so the believer inherits the Bible. The record of his Father's love is all his own. But though it is the same God who gives it all, and though it is the same Saviour whom it all reveals, there are diversities of tastes ; and to meet these tastes, there are diversities of adaptations. Leighton basks in the warm evening sunshine of Peter, and Luther grows electric with the yearning affection and evangelistic ardour of Paul. With

the Sermon on the Mount and the hortatory epistles for their topic, the English Reformers sought to foster in their hearers a practical piety ; whilst, coeval with the Ridleys and Latimers, the Donns and the Hammonds of England, the North gave birth to men like Knox, and Melville, and Bruce,—men who took their cue from the old Hebrew prophets, and their text from the Kings or the Judges,—a lion-bearding, image-breaking race, full of their own sublime purpose, which, out of a race of swordsmen and robbers, sought to make a covenanted nation,—and in carrying that purpose as fearless of man as they were faithful to their God. And so, it is not only possible, but we might almost say desirable, that each Bible-book had its own student,—one who found in it a special pleasure, and who round it as a nucleus aggregated materials from the rest. But it is still more needful alongside of any partial study like this, to secure a comprehensive knowledge of the Scriptures complete. No single book can make a Bible, just as no one truth can make a full revelation. It is, therefore, by comparing scripture with scripture,—by reading Hebrews in the light of Leviticus,—by supplementing Matthew's parables with John's conversations,—by comparing the justifying righteousness of Romans with the justifying faith of Galatians, and both together with the faith-justifying works

of James, that our creed will attain symmetry and system, and like an arch, which is not all pier or all key-stone, but which consists of many courses fitly framed together, our faith—self-consistent and self-sustaining—will not readily break down. The gospel,—the great faithful saying, is the key-stone ; but on that grand central truth,—the Cross of Christ, God Manifest, Love Incarnate, the Mediator at once human and Divine—on that great key-stone, from where Genesis opens to where the Apocalypse closes, every successive instalment has a purchase and puts forth a strengthening pressure. And if it add to your intelligence to know the special purport of every Bible-book ; if it be creditable and scholar-like to be able to tell, off-hand, how Second Samuel relates the reign of David, and how Second John is an apostolic counsel to a Christian Lady ; you will only attain a thorough Bible mastery, you will then only be mighty in the Scriptures, when you know their respective contributions to the cardinal Revelation, and can point out that testimony concerning Jesus, which is the essence of them all.*

* Every book of the Bible has its own "burden." It makes its specific addition to the aggregate Revelation. The reader could address himself to no more profitable inquiry than to ascertain the principal subjects and prevailing purport of each book,—in some cases, of each chapter or section ; and it would be a material aid to his understanding and memory if he could condense the result into a brief "running title." In the

5. Those who are acquainted with Greek or Hebrew, will naturally take the opportunity of reading the Scriptures in their original languages. In that case, they will find no doctrine nor important fact with which our authorised version has not already brought them acquainted; but they may find many expressions, which, in the original, acquire new force or felicity. But a chief advantage of reading the Greek, or the Hebrew, is, that it keeps the mind alert, and necessitates a closer marking of words and phrases, than when running over the well-known verses of our English Bible. For the same reason you will often find it of service to read a foreign translation. In Luther's or De Wette's German Bible, in the French of Martini or De Sacy, in the Italian of Diodati, or the Dutch of the States-General or of Van der Palm, the occasional discrepancies and the curious idioms will keep your attention awake; and, like a gem

German Psalters, quaint and suggestive names are given to some of the psalms. For instance, the 101st is "David's Regentenspiegel" "David's Mirror for Magistrates;" the 119th, "Der Christen goldenes A B C," &c., "The Christian's Golden Alphabet." Thomas Brooke calls the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, "that little Book of Martyrs;" and "Sacred Idylls," is the name which Dr Goode has given to his version of Solomon's Song. The reader will have no difficulty in finding out "King David's Pastoral," and Messiah's "Epinikion, or Carmen triumphale;" but every one may not have noticed that the New Testament contains two Epistles to the Ephesians and two to the Hebrews.

in a fresh setting, like a picture in a new frame, you will be at once surprised and delighted by the novel aspect of familiar ideas. Or, as an edifying recreation, why might not a few friends compare, stanza by stanza, the Psalms, as they have been rendered by Watts, and Merrick, and Keble, and by the Scotch and English versionists; or, as they have been done into Latin measure by Johnstone and Buchanan? Or, why might they not go over, verse by verse, a chapter of a Gospel, or of an Epistle, as given by Wiclif and Tyndale, and our other early translators,* noting, as they proceed, any seeming diversities or any peculiar and emphatic expressions?

6. In family worship it is usually best to read some book or the entire Bible right through, chapter by chapter; but in his private study, every reader must adopt the plan which suits his turn of mind and his circumstances. A man of leisure may allot a large portion for his daily perusal; and in his progress from book to book, he may avail himself of the commentator or critic who has done the most to expound it. And a man of little leisure, like the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, may be glad to snatch for his morning meal, a promise or a proverb,—the

* For this, every facility is afforded in Bagster's "English Hexap'a,"—a work containing the English New Testament of Wiclif, Tyndale, and Cranmer, and the Genevan, Anglo-Rhemish, and Authorised Versions.

verse of a Psalm, or a sentence from a Gospel. But even the busiest man will find occasional opportunities for more extensive reading; and on some quiet evening, or in the seclusion of the Sabbath, you could not do better than sit down to the Bible, as you would to a theological treatise or a volume of Christian biography, with your mind made up to a deliberate and straightforward perusal. With this view you may select the history of Joseph or Samson, of David or Solomon; the Journeys of the Israelites; the Missionary Excursions of St Paul: or you may resolve to master a century of Hebrew History, connecting with the recorded events the contemporary prophecies: or you may determine to read right through a Gospel Narrative, or the whole writings of some apostle, James, John, or Peter. And just as you find the charms of continuity and completeness enhance all the other attractions of an ordinary book,—so, in perfect harmony with devout and reverential feelings, will the course of the narrative, the development of the leading idea, the progress of the argument, enlist your interest and quicken your perceptive powers. Indeed, there are many of the inspired writings with which it is hardly fair to deal otherwise. To take the analogous case,—when you have only a minute to spare, you may run your eye over a Hymn of Cowper, or a “Thought” of Pascal, and at once glean something memor-

able; but you would hardly think it justice to a Sermon of Horsley, or a Biography of Walton, or a Drama of Racine, to read it at the rate of two pages a-day; yet this is the treatment usually given to the kindred compositions contained in the Sacred Volume. No doubt, to keep pace with readers who "run," it has "words upon wheels;" and a Psalm, or a single apostolic exhortation, may supply to the man most hard-pressed and hurried, material for the day's meditation; and we cannot be sufficiently thankful for such terse and portable sayings. But connected prophecies and lengthened narratives lose much of their impressiveness when split into isolated sections; and, to say nothing of the every-day error which quotes the reasonings of Bildad and Zophar, as if they were no less authoritative than the Divine Arbiter's own deliverance—dissevered from that final deliverance, a drama, like Job, loses half its significance and all its unity. Read in this fragmentary fashion, the Epistle to the Hebrews has failed to disclose to many a Protestant the true theory of Christian Sacerdotalism, and the Epistle to the Romans is obscure on the method of justification. And, forbearing reference to the most sacred of all Biographies, were the reader trying the experiment on himself, he might possibly find that the journeys of Paul the apostle have not left on his mind an impression so

lucid as the career of Whitefield or Eliot, and that his outline of Hebrew History is a sad contrast to his knowledge of his own country's annals. And yet, he has read the sacred records ten times as often as any uninspired historian. But—which sufficiently accounts for the difference—the modern author was eagerly resumed night after night, till the perusal was ended: Samuel and Luke were meted out in daily tasks, and never read except in small disjointed fragments.

7. Like other books, the charm of the Bible will very much depend on the frame of mind in which it is studied. To an earnest reader, it will always be interesting; to a docile reader, it will always be new and surprising. If you intend to visit the lands where gold is gathered, you will peruse with avidity the publications which describe them, and which tell you what equipments to provide. Or if you are fond of some science, you will spend half the night devouring a treatise which expounds its principles, and you will feel richly rewarded in your fresh information or your new intellectual mastery. So was it with John Colby. As soon as he learned to desire a better country, "God gave him a heart for the blessed Testament;" and nearly all the waking hours of his remaining three years were devoted to its study. If we, too, want "a religion good and strong, that will

keep by us and help us when we come to die ;” if conformity to God’s will be the science on which we are most intent ; we shall need no inducement more powerful to draw us back to these Scriptures ever and anon. To an honest heart they never lack the zest of novelty ; nor so long as the mind is wakeful will there ever be an end of their wonders. When the Jews returned from Babylon, and were somewhat settled in their ancient city, the occasion was signalised by a great Scripture-reading. Assembling early, and commencing with prayer, the Governor and the Ministers occupying a platform in the midst, whilst a vast congregation thronged the square, one voice relieved another, till the sobs and bitter cries of the audience interrupted the speakers. The tale of God’s mercies ; the recital of His good commandments, and the whole history of their nation’s provocations and perversity, had broken the heart of the people ; and though the rulers succeeded in stilling their lamentations, no time was lost in carrying out one practical conclusion. “ They found writtten in the law, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month. So the people went forth and brought olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of shady trees, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their

courts, and in the courts of the House of God, and sat under the booths ; for since the days of Joshua, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness." The perusal of the law had pointed out a neglected duty ; the heart of the people was soft ; it was the very season when the feast should be kept ; no time was lost : but as the people prepared themselves hastily to keep the commandment, so Jehovah blessed with His immediate smile,—“a great gladness,”—the nation’s new obedience. An enchanted scene it was in that clear autumn weather : every street arched over with its verdant trellis, and every flat roof a fragrant bower ; Jerusalem suddenly converted into a forest, and its new temple a mount waving with shrubbery and blazing with flowers : whilst, sweeter than the breath of the myrtle, rose the incense of praise and the swell of a sanctified patriotism. It was a week of waking blessedness,—as if a segment of the heavenly Sabbath had dropped into the days of earth, and people wondered at their happiness. Yet, after all, they were only carrying out a command which had for ages existed in the Word of God ; with the existence of which some of them were doubtless acquainted long ago ; but which, had it not been for the propitious mood of that moment, might have remained a dead letter till Jerusalem was a second time destroyed. And

even so, there may be both doctrines and duties still latent in Scripture, whose discovery only awaits our more docile perusal. And, like the Jews at the revival of the Feast of Tabernacles, when we comply with the neglected command, or credit the faithful saying, we shall experience "a great gladness,"—the joy which has already rewarded more teachable scholars, and which, with more candour, would sooner have greeted ourselves.

Finally, prayer is a sure means of rendering the Word read both pleasant and profitable. There is a certain congeniality of mind essential to the enjoyment and right understanding of any book. A man of scientific exactitude will soon weary of a work of fancy, and a poet will soon lay aside a work of tame technicalities. And, looking to their external style, there are few minds so universal as to appreciate equally every sacred composition, historical, poetical, argumentative, didactic; and there has been much wresting of Scripture from forgetting this obvious distinction. Frigid critics have applied their micrometers to the imagery of Isaiah, and have subjected to logical severity the metaphors of Job; just as some over-heated fancies have seen no end of mysteries in the books of Esther and Ezra. Happy is it for a Bible-book when it finds a like-minded interpreter,—when a poet, like Horne, expatiates on the Psalms, and when

a logician, like Haldane, expounds the Romans. But, apart from this outward form,—this human style,—historical, didactic, logical, poetic,—there is in it an inner, all-pervading style,—so to speak, God's own style,—a style of thought which is neither Hebrew nor Hellenistic—nay, nor even Human,—but aloof from all, and above them all,—a Heavenly style,—a tone of sanctity and benevolence and majesty, which makes this book as superhuman as it is all-adapted and all-blessing. To appreciate this,—to enter into this, the Divine mode of thinking and feeling,—it does not need that we become poets, reasoners, and sages ;—it does need, however, that we become worshippers. No man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him ; even so, no one knoweth the things of God, save the Spirit of God : and to give us sympathy with God's own mind, to enable us to credit such love as is the love of God, and to give us relish for such holiness as is the very essence of the Godhead, as well as to make us cheerfully bow to the authority of the Great Speaker, we need to be taught by the Holy Spirit. That Spirit is promised to prayer. God will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. And if, like John Colby, we cry to the Almighty, He will give us a heart for the blessed Testament. If, like Ezra and his audience, our reading of the Law is prefaced by prayer, it will

be followed by repentance and reform. If, like David, we exclaim, "Open Thou mine eyes," we shall see wonders in God's Word. If, with Paul, we bow the knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, He will strengthen us by His Spirit in the inner man, and Christ believed will dwell in our hearts, and we shall be enabled, through the faith of love, to apprehend somewhat of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge.





INDEX.

Authors quoted are printed in Italics.

ABSALOM, Death of, page 113.
Affliction, Comfort in, 31.
Alford, Dean, 82.
Ant, The, 153.
Apollo, The Belvidere, 140.
Augustine, 74.

BAUTAIN, Professor, 15.
Bible, the Word of God, 9-13; inspiration, 16, 124; ethical influence, 88-96; literary attractions, 98; spiritual efficacy, 129-132; boundless variety, 121; illuminated, 133; Natural History, 153; translations, 159.

Bilney's Conversion, 135.
Birks's "Horæ Paulinæ," 51.
Blunt's "Veracity of Gospels," 50.
Brougham, Lord, 144.

CHESTERFIELD, Earl of, 141.
Christianity, Civilising Influence of, 85; the great source of equity, 89; of compassion, 91; of truth, 93.

Colby, John, 149.
Columba, St, 81.

Conder's Literary History of the New Testament, 46.
Coxoper, William, 136.

Da Costa, 47.

EDWARDS, Jonathan, 136.
Equity, 89.
Ethics, Christian, 89-96
Evidence, Christian, 11, 40.

FLIEDNER, Pastor, 92.
Foster, John, 36, 107.
Frauds, Pious, 93.
French Prisoners in England, 8.

Gaussen, 127.
Geneva Students, 20.
Gospel, Growth of, 72.
Gospels, Genuineness and Authenticity of, 41.
Graham's, Mrs Isabella, Provision for Last Journey, 36.

HALDANE, Robert, 20.
Hilary, 74.
Horace, 104.

ILLUMINATED Bible and Living Epistle, 133.

Illustrations of Bible, 137.

Inspiration, 16, 124.

Iona, 80.

Isocrates, 103.

JOB, Sublimity of, 107, 110.

Johnson's Dying Advice to a
Young man, 6.

KNOX, John, 36.

LAWRENCE of Baschurch, 27.

Leaven, 85.

Literary Attractions of Bib'le,
98.

Longfellow, 23.

Luther, 81.

MATTHEW, Father, 83.

M'Cheyne, 107.

Medusa, or Sea-Nettle, 129.

Memory, Texts Committed to,
82.

Milton's Inspiration, whence
derived, 117.

Moore's Epicurean, 32.

NASMITH, David, 83.

Niebuhr, Blind, 37.

OLD age, 33.

Originality, True, 139.

PATTERSON, J. B., 13.

"Physiopathy," 107.

Pitcairn Island, 79.

Pollok, 19, 118.

RAGGED Schools, 83.

Romilly on the Refining In-
fluence of Christianity, 115.

Ruth, 112.

SALMASIUS, 35.

Simeon, Rev. C., 27.

Stoneman, Harriet, 39.

TABERNACLES, The great
Feast of, 165.

Thunder-Storm described by
Psalmist, 106.

Truth, 93.

WALKER's "Philosophy of the
Plan of Salvation," 61.

Wilberforce, W., 143.

Zchokke, 15.



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